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UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES FOR SCHOOLS: A NEW ZEALAND PERSPECTIVE

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UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES FOR
SCHOOLS: A NEW ZEALAND PERSPECTIVE

A Dissertation
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
in
Educational Leadership

by
Dorry Lillard
December 2017

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ABSTRACT

Alternative disciplinary strategies for K-12 educational institutions have been gaining popularity around the globe for challenging the epidemic of suspensions and expulsions that foster unsafe school climates and position youth on the pipeline-to-prison. This study used a qualitative approach to investigate Restorative Practices (RP) an innovative, alternative approach to discipline that appears to make a difference in New Zealand schools. The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to gain qualitative insight from twelve experienced professionals in RP in New Zealand into an approach that appears to transform school cultures and helps students remain in school and continue learning. The data collected from participants included their perspectives on the purpose and significance of the RP approach and offered insight into the implementation process and suggestions for long lasting sustainability. Participants also stressed how harsh disciplinary policies can impede positive school climates, which ultimately in large measure shape our society. Furthermore, it has been well documented that punitive practices, such as zero-tolerance are largely responsible for the enormous number of suspensions and expulsions that disproportionately impact primarily students with disabilities and students of color. California and other states around the US are currently using the RP model to address problems. The approach has been noted in this study as a paradigm shift in school culture that largely depends on leadership buy-in and effective implementation for success. The objective of this study was to

investigate the purpose and significance of the RP for schools using qualitative methods to conduct twelve in-depth interviews of professionals with significant experience of RP in the region of Auckland, New Zealand. Findings from this study suggested that RP is a useful approach for attending to relational harm, which threatens to breakdown social structures in educational institutions. RP was also found to strengthen relationships, improve classroom and school climates and cultures and build social capital. Findings also indicated that RP shifts the power dynamic in the classroom, empowering students by enabling voice and agency, while improving teacher-student relationships, known to help narrow achievement gaps. Moreover, findings showed that RP teaches students valuable life skills, enabling them make better decisions, have healthier relationships, and be positive contributors to society. Finally, the findings suggested that RP repositions education significantly amounting to a huge revolution that can potentially change the future of education. Astute educational leaders and institutions around the globe recognize the need for systemic transformation. New Zealand is highlighted in this study as the leading country for RP in schools worldwide, as it has experienced transformative success with this approach so far.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beloved brother, Jamey Don Sathoff, in honor of his legacy as a first generation college student. Thank you dear brother for believing in me and instilling in me the importance of education. This is a product of your inspiration and example.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
Problem Statement.....	1
Purpose Statement.....	5
Research Question	9
Significance of the Study	9
Delimitations	11
Definition of Key Terms	11
Summary	12
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
Challenging Zero Tolerance Policies with Alternative Disciplinary Practices	14
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	
Purpose of the Study	96
Research Design	99

Methodology	101
Methods	105
Research Setting	105
Research Sample	107
Research Instrumentation	108
Data Collection	111
Data Analysis.....	113
Dissemination	114
Validity and Trustworthiness.....	114
Role of the Researcher.....	116
Summary	118
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND RESULTS.....	120
Relationships and Interpersonal Learning	121
Teacher- Student Relationships	130
Classroom Culture and Climate.....	141
School Culture and Climate	145
Implementation	172
Storytelling is Better than Data	214
Barriers	224

Impact on Society: A Vision for Societal Transformation.....	254
CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION	271
Summary of the Findings.....	272
Discussion	274
Summary of Findings.....	289
Recommendations for Educational Leaders.....	291
Next Steps for Educational Reform	293
Recommendations for Future Research.....	294
Limitations of Study	295
Conclusion	297
APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL.....	298
APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM.....	300
APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM	303
REFERENCES	307

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Sample Interview Questions Mapped to the Research Question	108
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Response- to- Intervention Model	61
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Creating safer and happier school environments and finding solutions to help decrease school suspensions and expulsions have been an ongoing global challenge. This endeavor has led extensive research efforts in seeking innovative preventative and intervention alternatives for schools to address issues that are known to create unsafe learning environments and deprive students of learning opportunities. There is currently a global concern regarding the increase in suspensions and expulsions, resulting from harsh punitive practices that are now being linked to harsh punitive discipline policies known as zero-tolerance.

Problem Statement

History of Zero-Tolerance Policies

According to Kang-Brown, Trone, Fratello and Daftary-Kapur (2013), schools began adopting “zero-tolerance policies” in the late 1980s, which largely resulted from a rise in “juvenile arrests for violent crimes” creating a negative public image of youth, as they were perceived as “dangerous” (p. 2). As Congress began feeling pressure to respond, “tough-on-crime laws” were applied to schools. One of the laws passed was called the “Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994” (p. 1). This law required that students be expelled for up to one year if a weapon was brought to school. The authors further noted that, although the

juvenile offenses began to decline after 1994, the fear of young people became infused in the minds of adults. After the 1999 massacre at Columbine High School, there was a rising tide of fear across the nation that created a climate necessitating zero-tolerance policies in schools. Federal funding then became a motivating factor for schools to implement these practices as the government began to provide funds for increased security in schools. The problem with these policies now is that they are proving problematic for school cultures and climates and position youth on the pipeline-to-prison. As reports indicated that harsh punitive policies are not only ineffective, they also potentially contribute to the “school-to-prison pipeline” (p. 1). Kusnir (2014) argued that zero-tolerance policies generally involve immediate and automatic action (often with little room for school principals to exercise discretion), such as suspension or expulsion against any student who threatens the safety of other students or school personnel. The threats can include anything from a remark to brandishing a weapon or drug possession.

Punitive practices, such as zero-tolerance, are embedded in our cultural discourses and have been the normative response to systemic issues that arise in schools, such as breaking the rules and unacceptable behavior. Studies show that punitive practices may also be linked to negative school culture and climate, when utilized as the only disciplinary response to misbehavior. Furthermore, there are common themes among scholars, suggesting a correlation with high-school dropout rates and the school-to-prison pipeline (Simson, 2013, p. 2).

Although punitive measures such as office referrals, detentions, suspensions, and expulsions, have been the common responses to rule-breaking and behavioral problems in schools, researchers are finding that punishing and isolating the offender as a response to these issues may exacerbate the problem.

According to research, zero-tolerance policies pose a “detrimental” threat to “academic success” and the overall “wellbeing” of students (Simson, 2013, p.1). The American Psychological Association summoned a task force in 2008 to evaluate zero-tolerance policies by reviewing literature over the twenty-year history of zero-tolerance implementation and found that data was scant in evaluating this policy as a disciplinary approach. Furthermore, the report offers alternative reform recommendations for zero-tolerance policies for schools where “more appropriate” approaches are deemed necessary (p. 852).

Although punitive measures have been the common responses to rule-breaking and behavioral problems in schools, researchers are finding that punishing and isolating the offender as a response to these issues are creating bigger problems for school cultures and climates. Consequently, there is a need for additional research, investigating the benefits of implementing alternative approaches in schools addressing the concerns of classroom disruption and offending. The systemic goal is to focus on programs that foster “nurturing,” “safe,” and “inclusive” school environments for students (Simson, 2013, p.2). Common themes further emphasize a need for research regarding the potential

negative impact of punitive measures for classroom management and school culture.

The Cost of Punitive Practices

It has been well documented that punitive practices lead to an increase in school suspensions and expulsions and are costly for school districts. For example, in the San Bernardino County in California, Winslade, Espinoza, Myers, and Yzaguirre (2014) noted, during the school year 2011—2012, “There was one suspension or expulsion (combined) for every five students in the County” (p. 6). According to reports from the California Department of Education (CDE), from (2013-2014) there were approximately 7,188 suspensions in San Bernardino City Unified School District (SBCUSD). For two-day suspensions, there would be a loss of approximately \$503,160 in ADA (Average Daily Attendance). For four-day suspensions, there would be a loss of \$1,006,320 (ADA is based on \$35.00 per day). These figures raise concerns for administrators and motivate school districts to seek evidenced-based, alternative behavioral reform methods (Winslade, Espinoza, Myers, & Yzaguirre, 2014, p.10)

Suspensions and Expulsions in the United States and California

Torlakson (2015), State Superintendent of Public Instruction, said that the California Department of Education (CDE) reported there were approximately forty-nine million students enrolled in public schools in the US. Data shows that over three and a half-million students received in-school suspensions in 2012; three million forty-five students were suspended out-of-school; and one hundred

thirty thousand were expelled. However, in California there has been a twenty-percent drop in the number of students expelled in the last few years and a fifteen-percent decline in the number of students suspended. According to Torlakson (2015), the decline is being attributed to the “California Department of Education (CDE) working with districts around the state to implement innovative programs that reduce suspensions and expulsions, including some known as restorative justice” (p. 1). Torlakson argues, “You can have the best facilities, the best teachers, and the best curriculum in the world, but none of that matters if the students are not in school” (p. 2).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to shed light on an innovative alternative approach to disciplinary practices in schools known as Restorative Practices (RP) in the region of Auckland, New Zealand. RP is gaining attention around the globe for keeping students in school, creating safer and more caring school climates, and building strong school cultures.

The aim of this study is to explore RP from the lens of experts in the field from various professional settings in Auckland, New Zealand, with numerous years of experience with this approach, as I believed that gaining knowledge from experienced professionals in this country would contribute to the purpose and credibility of my research. According to the New Zealand Practice Manual (Boyack, 2000) New Zealand is the leading country in RP in schools, dating back

to the Maori who played a significant role in its development through traditional cultural customs and traditions throughout history. This innovative alternative approach to harsh discipline is known to help foster safer school climates; reduce suspensions and expulsions; narrow the school-to prison pipeline; heal relational problems that interfere with learning; and narrow the achievement gap. This study may bring awareness and hope for schools that are seeking alternative reform methods, in efforts to decrease suspensions and expulsions, attend to relational harm, improve teacher-student relationships, improve classroom climate and culture and help foster happier and safer school environments. In order to continue shedding light on alternative practices that do not recapitulate non-effective disciplinary practices that are contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline, I conducted a study investigating Restorative Practices in New Zealand schools in hopes to raise awareness about an innovative approach that appears to be making a difference. The researcher's aim was to bring awareness and hope for schools that are seeking alternative reform methods in efforts to create safer school climates, improve teacher-student relationships, improve, classroom climate and culture, decrease the school-to-prison pipeline problem, reduce suspension rates, reduce office referrals, and heal relational problems that interfere with learning.

The objective of this study was to investigate RP in the region of Auckland, New Zealand in hopes to shed light on an innovative alternative approach in school that appear to be making a difference for students and school

climates and cultures. The researcher's intent for this study was to gain knowledge and insight into the significance, purpose of the RP approach in New Zealand schools. I interviewed a series of experienced practitioners in the field of RP and inquired about their personal experiences with the approach, which included questions regarding implementation.

After transcribing the data, I compared the findings of the interviews to the literature and looked for common themes among them. Furthermore, I explored the theory and philosophy of restorative practices in order to contribute to existing research on the purpose and significance of restorative practices as an alternative approach to school discipline. Additionally, since restorative practices in schools are in its infancy stages, there is a paucity of research on the purpose and significance of RP programs for schools. Therefore, this study builds on the existing research on the significance, purpose and implementation of restorative practices in schools, noted to "change the hearts and minds of everyone so that the focus is on strengthening and repairing relationships in classrooms and across the school community" (Thorsborne and Blood 2013, p.11).

This is a qualitative intrinsic case study research project. The researcher chose the case study method to conduct this research, because it was the best design to guide the overall purpose of the researcher's endeavors. Furthermore, intrinsic case study aims to explain the "phenomenon of interest" (Zucker, 2009, p.2). This type of approach is "exploratory in nature" and the purpose of the approach is to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of a particular

case. In this case, the investigation of the purpose and significance of RP in New Zealand schools was the primary focus (Stake, 1995, p. 112). Moreover, Yin (2003) argued that this type of case study is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon in the real-life context in which it occurred. For this particular study, the researcher interviewed experienced practitioners in the field of RP in the area of Auckland, New Zealand for the purpose of gaining knowledge that can help narrow the gap on understandings of this approach for schools. According to Yin, (2003) a holistic single case study can be considered if the case is “unique or extreme” (549). In this case study, the fact that the participants are located in Auckland, New Zealand and they all work in different professional settings, makes this study unique, because since RP in schools are in its infancy stage, there is dearth research investigating the significance and purpose of RP from the eyes of experts in the field who occupy jobs in several different professional settings. American schools are in need of innovative alternative disciplinary approaches that help students remain in school and continue learning. This study may also enhance international appreciation and learning that may not only benefit school in America, but may also benefit schools in other countries throughout the world.

Research Question

The researcher sought to explore the significance and purpose of Restorative Practices in New Zealand. The research question used to guide this investigation was:

- In what ways do experienced practitioners in the field of Restorative Practices in New Zealand make sense of its significance and purpose as an alternative approach to school discipline?

Significance of the Study

Increased suspension rates and office referrals are an ongoing problem for schools nationwide. In the U.S alone, more than three million students are suspended each year. It appears that many of the suspensions are racially biased. For example, Valdebenito, Eisner, Farrington, Ttofi and Sutherland (2013) reported that African-American students are three times more likely to be suspended than white students. Restorative practices are believed to narrow the racial gap in school discipline and keep students attending school so that they can continue learning.

American schools are in need of innovative programs that foster safe classroom and school environments and help teach students valuable relational skills that will help them live a happier and more fulfilling life. The emphasis of this non-punitive approach highlights the development of positive relationships, rather than punishment (Winslade & Williams, 2012). Postmodern approaches to

restorative practices, such as the narrative approach, argue that punitive measures do not work when seeking effective alternatives to negative behavior (Winslade, 2013). The restorative practices approach is known to be more effective than punitive measures for students who misbehave and break the rules in school. This study will highlight what is working in New Zealand schools in hopes to influence school leaders in America to try an innovative, evidence-based approach that will help foster safer school climates and decrease the school-to-prison pipeline, which will create a safer and more just society for all.

Since New Zealand is the leading country for RP nation-wide, the researcher's hope was that the data would reflect the usefulness of this approach for American schools, as they are in need of innovative programs that help provide safe school environments for students and enable students to remain in school. The findings supported the notion that RP helps foster safe and healthy learning environments for students, and that the approach was an effective solution for strengthening relationships and addressing significant social needs.

Conclusions were drawn from participants with the assumption that triangulating responses with others would enhance their truth-value. Participants were volunteers and were able to withdraw from the study at any time with no ramifications, and anonymity and confidentiality was preserved throughout the study. Problematic issues will continue to be a challenge for schools, just as crime will continue to occur in society. The researcher acknowledges that a panacea for schools is unlikely. The findings of this study did not prove in any

final way that the implementation of the RP approach might be useful or effective in all school settings and in all geographical regions.

Delimitations

The study included interviews of several participants with experience in the field of restorative practices. Interviews were located in the surrounding areas of Auckland, New Zealand, in various professional settings. I specifically chose Auckland, New Zealand, to conduct this study because New Zealand is the leading country worldwide in restorative practices in schools. Furthermore, practitioners from various fields of work in restorative practices could provide valuable insight as to how the value of this approach was perceived for youth and the implications it could have for school climates and cultures. I, therefore, sought to answer the research question by interviewing various professionals in the field who had knowledge of and insight into restorative practices for schools.

Definition of Key Terms

Restorative Justice Practices: RJP widely involves recognizing, repairing and building relationships. Vaandering (2011) offers the most common definition of restorative justice, which includes the following three principles:

- (1) Crime (and misconduct) is a fundamental violation of people and interpersonal relationships.
- (2) Violations create obligations and liabilities.

(3) RJ seeks to heal and put right the wrongs (p. 314).

Restorative School Discipline: “Represents a school culture that permeates all aspects of school organization and relationships within the school as well as relationships between the school and its community” (Meyer & Evans 2012, p. 5).

School-to-Prison Pipeline: “Students who experience failure in school either by dropping out, or getting suspended and expelled from school, consequently are more likely to act out with criminal behavior and become incarcerated or imprisoned” (Wilson, 2014).

Zero-Tolerance Policies: “The policy of applying laws or penalties to even minor infringements of code in order to reinforce its overall importance” (Collins, 1989).

Summary

In addition to the problem with increased suspensions, schools are continuously seeking alternatives to help foster happier and safer school environments. The systemic goal is to focus on programs that foster “nurturing,” “safe” and “inclusive” school cultures (Simson, 2013, p. 2). This endeavor has led to extensive research efforts, investigating preventative and intervention reform alternatives that actually work. Punitive practices such as zero-tolerance are known to impede this goal (Winslade & Williams, 2012). However, these disciplinary practices are deeply embedded in our cultural discourses as the normative response to breaking the rules in school. The assumption that students learn from their mistakes and do not repeat the negative behavior, after

being disciplined by school authorities, is often dubious. However, this is not to say that all disciplinary practices are ineffective. As noted in *Safe and Peaceful Schools* (Winslade & Williams, 2012) “Discipline practices such as zero-tolerance may even prove to be more effective if used in combination with a range of other approaches but, on current evidence, they are less than effective on their own” (p. 6).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Challenging Zero Tolerance Policies with Alternative Disciplinary Practices

Creating safer and happier school environments and finding solutions to help decrease school suspensions and expulsions have been ongoing global challenges. This endeavor has led extensive research efforts to seek alternative measures to address behavioral issues in schools. Furthermore, with school shootings and “youth violence” on the rise (Winslade & Williams, 2012) and an increase in “dropout” rates (Cramer, Gonzalez & Pellegrini-Lafont, 2014) researchers are on a quest to find solutions to the problems and factors that are predisposing youth to the “school-to-prison pipeline” (Wilson, 2014, p. 48). The quest for alternative intervention and preventative measures to help foster safe school environments for students to learn, and keep them attending school, is an ongoing endeavor. Studies are now pointing to the problem of harsh disciplinary practices, such as exclusionary punishments and zero-tolerance, as having an “adverse” and “counterintuitive” impact on schools and society (Valdebenito, Eisner, Farrington, Ttofi & Sutherland, 2013, p. 4). For the purpose of seeking alternative reforms for zero-tolerance policies, it is paramount that we first understand the history of schooling, and how policy is influenced.

Historical Trends in Educational Reform

Education reform has rich history in American schools. Tyack and Cuban (1995) wrote that confidence in education historically, has created one of the most comprehensive public education systems in the world. The authors further argued that public opinion about success and failure in education reflects the general confidence in American institutions. History tells us that overall public opinion of education was highly positive from the 1940's to the 1950's. However, confidence in education began to steadily decline and opinions of public education continued to decline year after year. Around the mid-1990s, there became an over-reliance on the power of education, and schools were no longer seen as a universal cure for societal and economic problems. The dominant public opinion about the "grammar of schooling" and societal opinion about what a "real school" should look like, ultimately became a war between political forces at the top and stakeholders at the bottom (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 85).

Tyack and Cuban (1995) noted that as schools became increasingly standardized during the 1970s, state departments and "policy elites," such as the U.S. Bureau of Education, controlled everything from policy, to quality of buildings, courses, length of school terms, and qualifications of teachers (p. 44). Consequently, minority groups, students with disabilities, and children living in poverty were being left behind. However, in the eyes of the elites, schools were making steady progress toward success. According to Iorio (2011) the 1983 commission's report, *A Nation at Risk*, found K-12 public schools inadequate

throughout the country. As such, educational foundations were being viewed as “mediocrity,” which threatened the educational future of our nation’s youth (p. 19). Furthermore, the laws that were passed during this time, required higher standards and expectations for all levels of students. Consequently, the notion of “progress” and “regress” in education became subject to opinion and arguably, politically charged (Iorio, 2011; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Our history tells us that implementation of educational policies are largely dependent upon power structures of the external environment, such as federal and state agencies. Notably, K-12 institutions will implement policies for the sole purpose of maintaining legitimacy with the external environment (Powell & DeMaggio, 1991). Hanson (2001) argued that legitimacy is the ultimate driving force behind schools conforming to standards, rules, expectations, and external pressures from the environment. Three leading scholars in institutional theory stated:

School organizations go to the greatest lengths, not to accomplish instructional ends, but to maintain their legitimate status as schools. They seek accreditation, which depends on structural conformity with a set of rules that are professionally specified and legally mandated, and react in panic when it is threatened. (Meyer, Scott & Deal, 1992, p. 54)

Hanson (2001) wrote:

Organizations selectively adopt externally defined goals and processes in an effort to establish legitimization in the eyes of society. That is, they try

to gain societal confidence by doing what the major stakeholders on the outside expect them to do. Through legitimization, an organization establishes justification for a claim on societal resources and protects itself against attacks on its activities and procedures. Thus when educational organizations can argue that they are doing what the state requires, what the best research indicates, what the professional societies expect, what the courts require, and so on, they are rewarded for their conformity. (p. 650)

Zero Tolerance Policies

One educational policy that was widely implemented as a result of external pressures is known as zero-tolerance. Notably, zero-tolerance policies have been gaining momentum after receiving federal and state support, and are now the dominant discourse in school discipline. The problem today with this policy is that it is notably, disproportionately pushing students out of school, predominantly minority males, and funneling them into the pipeline-to-prison (Eisner, Farrington, Ttofi & Sutherland, 2013). Zero-tolerance is a prime example of a politically charged policy that educational organizations across the nation have bought into in order to establish, or maintain, their legitimate position. Hanson (2001) supported this notion, by stating that educational organizations will adopt policies, in order to receive legitimacy and support from their external environment.

Zero-tolerance policies began their implementation into schools around the late 1990s. There was a significant increase in juvenile crime causing a rising tide of fear of our nation's youth, and the response was harsher disciplinary practices in schools. Disciplinary policies such as zero-tolerance appeared to be a practical solution at the time for keeping schools safe. After the 1999 high profile shooting at Columbine High School, in Littleton, Colorado, zero-tolerance policies rapidly spread across the entire nation. According to Kang-Brown et al. (2013) "70 percent of schools had adopted zero tolerance policies for violence, going beyond federal mandates by 1996-97" (p. 2). Notably, punitive practices such as zero-tolerance, are now deeply embedded in our school cultures as normative responses to discipline. Although evidence shows the immense negative impacts of this approach, schools continue to utilize this method to control misconduct and other issues that disrupt the learning environment.

Kang-Brown et al. (2013) reported that the fidelity of zero-tolerance policies was to ensure the safety of schools, by imposing harsh punishments to those who brought illegal drugs or weapons to school. However, after schools began to receive government funding for higher security and were offered incentives for implementing harsh punitive practices, it rapidly became widespread throughout the United States. Research indicates that the problem with these policies today, is that they have resulted in an enormous number of suspensions and expulsions. Students are being pushed out of school and deprived of an education as a punishment for wrongdoing, regardless how minor

the offense may be. The authors further argued that principals and school administrators are no longer dealing with misconduct on a “case-by-case basis, considering the circumstances of the event, the specific students involved, and the repercussions for the overall safety of the school environment” (p. 1).

Notably, students of color and disabled individuals have been most negatively affected by zero-tolerance policies. As such, controversy has risen about harsh disciplinary procedures as highly subjective and discriminatory in nature. Simmons (2015) declared, “Racial disparities in school discipline are so extreme, and the consequences are so harsh in fact, that recent scholarship in education presents the phenomenon as a major civil rights issue” (p. 81). Eisner, et al., (2013) noted that harsh discipline policies are not only negatively impacting youth, but they also are having an “adverse” and “counterintuitive” impact on school cultures and society (p. 4). Simson (2013) further noted that this type of response is known to pose a “detrimental” threat to “academic success” and overall “wellbeing” of students (p. 1).

Although punitive measures such as office referrals, detentions, suspensions and expulsions, have been the common responses to addressing problems that arise in schools, “researchers are finding that punishing and isolating the offender as a response to these issues are exacerbating the problems” (p. 2). As such, researchers are now calling the zero-tolerance problem a “national concern,” and scholars have widely agreed that harsh

disciplinary practices do not work as a response to problematic issues that arise in schools (Wilson, 2014, p. 51).

Efficacy of Policy Strategies

Research tells us that harsh disciplinary practices have become deeply embedded in American schools as the normative response to rule breaking and misbehavior. In order to begin pushing back on harsh discipline policies, it is important to understand the dominant external influences driving the efficacy of policy implementation and strategies. Common themes emerge among literature, in regard to efficacy of policy implementation and strategies, highlighting a profound contrast of top-down and bottom-up approaches to change in “America’s public schools” (Copland, 2003, p. 375). Current research on the topic of school leadership, and the traditional hierarchical model (top-down), of leadership in schools, involves decision-making of those in the position of formal authority (elites). This power structure challenges the efficacy of policy implementation, in regard to making educational improvements. Arguably, the dependency solely on the elites’ vision for improvement, and adherence to the decisions made by those in authority, has failed in the efforts to reform schools and promote positive whole school change.

Former scholars of institutional theory emphasize, that educational policy implementation is rigid in institutions, and is designed to reflect institutionalized rules (Scott, 2013; Hanson 2001). We must understand how the tenets of

institutional theory, and the power structure of educational organizations, can support reform efforts of policies that are problematic for students.

According to Marsh and Bowman (1988) studies of policy implementation of “top” refers to federal or state agencies, while “bottom” refers to districts, schools, and teachers in the educational setting. Research regarding the top-down approach to policy implementation, emphasize that this approach is “power-coercive,” while bottom-up is more “collaborative (p. 3). The authors further argued that both approaches have been historically “pitted” against each other. Notably, one or the other will come into favor, but then will be rejected. In a top-down setting, formal authority will take the lead in getting things done, while in bottom-up settings, the power is more “equalized” and “distributed” reducing the authority of one group’s influence over another (p. 4).

Scott (2013) wrote:

Focusing on organizational research within K-12 systems, I know of considerable research relating to bureaucratic and professional tensions, student and academic culture, loose and tight coupling between organizational level or between structures and activities- with coupling becoming more tight after the adoption of federal standards and standardized testing, federal and state systems as they relate to district and school organizational structures, and varying school responses to efforts by external interests groups to influence school curricula. (p. 6)

Copland (2003) noted, that efficacy of policies that promote whole school change, requires collective action from the stakeholders at the “bottom” of the pyramid (Marsh & Bowman, 1988, p. 3). Such stakeholders include school community, teachers, administrators, and other internal and external school community members. Notably, the “top-down strategies must include bottom up participation” in order to be successful (p. 2). In other words, policy success and sustainability is dependent upon buy-in from stakeholders at the bottom, primarily teachers. The author further argued, that policy implementation research highlights factors that block or enhance implementation, from the point of view of top-down and bottom-up approaches. The “distinction” between these approaches is significant to understand, as they “play a large role in the implementation processes” (Copland, 2003; Marsh & Bowman, 1988, p. 3).

Marsh and Huberman (1984) wrote:

In high control conditions... administrators rely on their formal authority to try to get things done the way they want them to be done... (while) in a low-control situation, power is ‘equalized’ i.e., distributed among the involved parties so as to reduce the asymmetry of ones group’s influence over another. (p. 54)

A Broader Lens

According to research, the top-down models are predominantly identified as the dominant approach to educational reform and policy implementation. However, researchers have recently emphasized the impact of integrating the

bottom-up approach in educational institutions, as a means to ensure successful reform and sustainable policy implementation. This innovative approach was outlined in the seminal work of Burch (2007) titled, *Crafting a Wider Lens*, underscoring a new perspective on institutional theory and analysis of public education. Scholars in education have examined the tensions with the top-down approach, in regard to policy and classroom practices, and have recently contributed to literature on the topic, by providing a broader lens to successful and sustainable policy initiatives.

This broader lens highlights a bottom-up philosophy to efficiency and positive change, involving “loose coupling,” and more autonomy in organizational management. Recent studies on institutional theory have highlighted the significance of this approach, by underscoring how “policies and practices interact with institutional environments to shape policy outcomes” (Burch, 2007, p. 85). Burch (2007) noted, that institutional theory “encompasses a broad range of theorizing about the role of broader cultural norms in influencing organizational behavior” (p. 45). Furthermore, the author argued that the tenets of institutional theory can support reform efforts in American institutions, as it pertains to “faithful implementation” and “sustained improvements” at the core of schooling (p. 45).

The Problem

According to Winslade, Espinoza, Myers and Yzaguirre (2014) in California there were more suspensions issued than diplomas in the year 2010-11. Furthermore, discipline practices such as zero-tolerance, suspension, and

exclusions have been linked to the school-to-prison pipeline in recent literature. The school-to-prison pipeline is "the causal link between educational exclusion and criminalization of youth" (Wilson, 2014, p.49). Reports show that students who experience failure in school either by dropping out, or getting suspended and expelled from school, consequently are more likely to act out with criminal behavior and become incarcerated or imprisoned.

The Cost of Punitive Practices

Winslade et al. (2014) argue that punitive practices lead to an increase in school suspensions and expulsions and are costly for school districts. For example, in the San Bernardino Unified School District in California, there were approximately 7,188 suspensions in a one-year period. For two-day suspensions, there was a loss of approximately \$503,160 in ADA (Average Daily Attendance) funding. For four-day suspensions, there was a loss of \$1,006,320 (ADA is based on \$35.00 per day). These figures raise concerns for administrators and motivate school districts to seek "evidenced-based alternative behavioral reform methods" (p. 10).

Suspensions and Expulsions in the United States and California

According to Winslade et al. (2014), there are approximately forty-nine million students enrolled in public schools in the US. Data shows that over three and a half-million students were suspended in school in 2012; three million forty-five students were suspended out-of-school; and one hundred thirty thousand students were expelled. However, in California there has been a twenty-percent

drop in the number of students expelled in the last few years and a fifteen-percent decline in the number of students suspended. According to Torlakson (2015), the decline is being attributed to the “California Department of Education (CDE) working with districts around the state to implement innovative programs that reduce suspensions and expulsions, including some known as restorative justice” (p. 1). Torlakson argues, “You can have the best facilities, the best teachers, and the best curriculum in the world, but none of that matters if the students are not in school” (Torlakson, 2015, p. 2).

Winslade and Williams (2012) noted, “Students who are expelled are often launched into a career that ends up in the pipeline-to-prison” (p. 82). Neustatter (2004) argued, “Children excluded from school are much more likely to commit crime” (p. 1). Punitive practices such as zero-tolerance have been the norm in America for controlling student misbehavior. Reports indicate, however, that punitive practices are not as effective as once perceived. In fact, they are now known to exacerbate the problem. Pavelka (2013) argues that zero-tolerance policies are utilized in school districts around the world as a response to violence and discipline. The policies are known to address school violence and discipline with a “high degree of severity” (p. 17).

There is a wealth of literature pointing to the fact that harsh punishment is known to create more problems for schools and that school climate is negatively impacted by these problems. Zehr (2007) further argued that punishment is counterproductive and problematic. One of the problems with punishment is that

it creates fear, which leads to resentment and anger (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013). Another problem noted, was that the root causes for the acting out get ignored. Moreover, the student offender is threatened by punishment, which leads to the inability to accept responsibility for the action, which does not allow space for the student offender to learn empathy for the victim (p. 24). The crucial point argued by the authors here, is that there is a big problem with punitive practices, known as zero-tolerance, in schools. There is a plethora of research indicating that it is not only ineffective, it can make matters worse. Consequently, alternative approaches are needed in schools to help make positive differences for students and school climates.

Exclusionary Practices Increase Suspensions

Friedman, McNiell and Chavez (2014) argued that, “California suspended more students than it graduated in the academic year 2010-11” (p. 2). Reports further indicate that the San Bernardino City School District, Kern Union High School District, Riverside Unified, and Fresno Unified hold the highest record of suspensions. Furthermore, according to recent studies, suspension rates have been increasingly steadily since the 1970s. Reports further argue that, “African Americans are three times more likely and Latinos are one and a half times more likely to be suspended than Anglos” (Friedman et al., 2014, p. 2). The most common reason given for most suspensions is “willful misconduct,” which was defined as “intentionally doing that which should not be done and recklessly disregarding the possibility that injury to a person is likely” (p. 3).

According to Valdebenito, Eisner, Farrington, Ttofi and Sutherland (2013) exclusions consist predominantly of males with a disproportionate number of adolescents from low socioeconomic backgrounds and particular ethnicities. Valdebenito et al. (2013) further assert, “Exclusion is seen as one of the most serious consequences of misbehavior” (p. 2). Exclusionary practices are the common disciplinary responses to misbehaviors in schools, and involve deprivation of education from the school. The student does not attend for a period of time, and sometimes indefinitely (Valdebenito et al., 2013). Another population that is frequently excluded is students with “emotional/behavioral disorders and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorders” (p. 2). According to Valdebenito et al. (2013), students with these types of disorders outweigh the number of students expelled with “learning disabilities” (p. 2). Evidence suggests, “Periods of exclusion may have detrimental effects on pupils’ learning outcomes” (p.2). Furthermore, the Valdebenito et al. (2013) study shows that exclusions can lead to larger problems, such as an increase in “student defiant behavior” and are also linked to “serious behavioral outcomes such as antisocial behavior, delinquency and entry into the juvenile justice system” (p.3).

Wilson (2014) concurs with Valdebenito et al. (2013) and argues, “Policies that seek to exclude students from our schools and the educational process are not in the public’s best interest” (p. 52). Universally, schools are seeking alternative strategies for responding to challenging behaviors that will keep students in school and create positive change for school safety and climate

(Wilson, 2014). Furthermore, Valdebenito et al. (2013) asserted that the time students are excluded from school varies in different countries. “It can range from hours to days and on the school premises or outside the premises” (p. 3). What have not been examined in previous literature are the new intervention strategies that are being implemented in schools and the impact they have on suspension and expulsion rates (Valdebenito et al., 2015).

Zero-tolerance and the School-to-prison Pipeline

Punitive practices such as zero-tolerance are embedded in our cultural discourses and have been the normative response to systemic issues that arise in schools, such as breaking the rules and unacceptable behavior. However, according to research, this type of response has been known to pose a “detrimental” threat to “academic success” and the overall “wellbeing” of students (Simson, 2013, p. 1).

Simson (2013) argues that punitive practices may also be linked to negative school culture and climate when utilized as the only disciplinary response to misbehavior. Furthermore, common themes among scholars suggest a correlation between high-school dropout rates and the school-to-prison pipeline. The author further argues that although punitive measures such as office referrals, detentions, suspensions and expulsions, have been the common responses to addressing rule-breaking and behavioral problems in schools, researchers are finding that punishing and isolating the offender as a response to these issues may exacerbate the problem. Consequently, there is a need for

additional research, investigating the benefits of implementing such behavioral reform programs in schools that address the concerns of classroom disruption and offending. The systemic goal of restorative justice research is to focus on programs that foster “nurturing,” “safe,” and “inclusive” school environments for students (p. 2). Common themes in literature emphasize a need for further research, regarding the potential negative impact of punitive measures for classroom management and school culture (Simson, 2013).

Discipline practices such as zero-tolerance, suspensions and exclusions have been linked to the school-to prison pipeline in recent literature. The school-to-prison pipeline is, “the causal link between educational exclusion and criminalization of youth” (Wilson, 2014, p. 49). Reports show that students who experience failure in school either by dropping out, or getting suspended and expelled from school, consequently are more likely to act out with criminal behavior and become incarcerated or imprisoned.

According to Wilson (2014) zero-tolerance practices are still being utilized in America and throughout the world. The author further argues this point by stating that the United States holds five percent of the entire world’s population, yet has “twenty-five percent of the world’s prisoners” (p. 51). According to studies, our prison population has “quadrupled since the 1980s” (p. 52). Schools are partly responsible for these staggering statistics, with over fifty per cent of those incarcerated never having received a high school diploma. “The very

policies that schools adopted to manage behavior and increase achievement are fostering failure and feeding the school-to-prison pipeline” (Wilson, 2014, p. 50).

Furthermore, there is a wealth of information from studies pointing to the fact that disciplinary practices such as “zero-tolerance” in schools can impede healthy and successful school climates. Thorsborne and Blood (2013) argue, “Harsh discipline contributes to a sense of disconnect in the school environment” (p. 24). Similarly, Amstutz and Mullet (2005) noted, “The negative effects of punishment are well documented,” and that harsh punishments in schools are “counterproductive” (p.12). Winslade and Williams (2012) reported, “There is one big problem with the zero-tolerance approach.” “It does not work” (p. 5). Findings are pointing to the fact that this particular response to offending behaviors is being linked to the school-to-prison pipeline that researchers are now calling a “national concern”, according to Wilson (2014, p. 51). What we now know about the impact and effects of discipline in schools, with the use of zero-tolerance, and the correlation of increases in suspensions and expulsions and the school-to-prison pipeline, is motivating researchers to find solutions to problems that are now not only a “national concern” but a global epidemic (p. 51).

Disciplinary procedures have been the common response to rule-breaking and problematic issues that arise in schools, involving the removal of offending students from educational opportunities by way of “suspension and expulsion” that are also referred to as, “exclusionary discipline policies” according to Wilson (2014, p. 51). The zero-tolerance policy was adopted for serious

offenders, such as those who brought dangerous weapons to school, that subsequently was the response to the nation-wide violent episodes involving school shootings. However, the zero-tolerance policy eventually became a standard practice for schools for addressing minor offenses, such as “fighting and disruptive behavior” (p. 50). Consequently, removing students from school and denying them educational opportunities became the standard practice for fostering safe school environments for others.

Triplet, Allen and Lewis (2014) reported that the “Obama administration’s call to action” and “legal and political scrutiny of zero-tolerance” may potentially be responsible for the recent trend in the school-to-prison pipeline (p. 352).

Triplet, et al. (2014) argue, there have been numerous arrests of “school children for non-criminal violations,” following the above mentioned movements (p. 352).

The study conducted by Triplet et al. (2014) sought to answer the question; “What is the relationship between school shootings and zero-tolerance discipline mandates” (p. 352). The data and analysis examined the school shootings from 1990-1999, which represents the period that zero-tolerance policies rapidly expanded. Research findings of this study further indicated that there were “racial disparities” among “minority students” (p. 354).

As zero-tolerance policies increased in popularity around the globe, “exclusionary discipline” practices increased and became the “punishment of choice” (Triplet, Allen & Lewis, 2014, p. 354). Triplet et al. (2014) further noted that the increase has caused suspensions to rise to an “epidemic level” (p. 355).

Findings from data collected from 26,000 U.S. middle and high schools indicated that, “More than two million students were suspended during the 2009-2010 academic year” (p. 355). Furthermore, the suspensions and expulsions had devastating consequences on “poor” and “minority” youth, who are often the target of exclusionary discipline practices (p. 355).

Researchers are finding correlations among exclusionary punishment, low academic performance and increased dropout rates (Triplet et al., p. 353). Evidence additionally points to the likelihood that dropping out significantly increases for those who have been suspended only once in the ninth grade (p. 353). Recent findings show that in addition to academic struggles and increased dropout rates, students are more likely to have social and emotional problems that can lead to “substance use, future delinquency, posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and aggressive behavior outside of school” (p. 355). Valdebenito, Eisner, Farrington, Ttofi and Sutherland (2013), noted that excluded students are “fifty percent more likely to display antisocial behavior and seventy percent more likely to engage in violent events” (p. 3). Valdebenito et al. (2013) further point to a correlation of “excluded schoolchildren” and their “involvement” in the “legal system,” that is, the “school-to-prison pipeline” (p. 3). Similarly, these same students are also at an increased risk for “adverse outcomes later in life,” such as the development of “antisocial syndrome” (p. 3). Valdebenito et al. (2013) concluded that non-excluded students were at an academic advantage as compared to excluded students. They found that only

six percent of non-excluded students were reported as “being arrested,” on “probation or on parole” (Valdebenito et al., 2013, p. 3).

Cramer, Gonzalez and Pellegrini-Lafont (2014) also argued that there is a strong correlation between the school-to-prison pipeline and “school dropouts and incarceration” (p. 461). Cramer et al. (2014) wrote, “A history of arrests prior to age sixteen, decreases graduation potential by 27%, and students who do not graduate from school are 26% more likely to become inmates” (p. 461).

Furthermore, there is a wealth of information and evidence pointing to the fact that students of color, particularly African American and Latino students represent the majority of students suspended and expelled from school (Culberson, Yzaguirre & Myers, 2015). Consequently, this population is at an “academic disadvantage” (p. 1). As noted in Wilson (2014) “School failure and exclusions” were linked to poor life outcomes, particularly for boys of color (p. 50).

There is a wealth of literature on this topic of zero-tolerance pointing to the fact that isolating students from their learning environments and harsh punishment is known to create more problems for schools, and that school climate is negatively impacted by these problems. Howard Zehr (2007) argued that punishment is counterproductive and problematic. Furthermore, one of the problems with punishment is that it creates fear, which leads to resentment and anger (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013). Another problem is that the root causes for the acting out are ignored. In addition, a student offender is threatened by

punishment, which leads to the inability to accept responsibility for the action and it does not allow space for the student offender to learn empathy for the victim.

The crucial point argued by the authors here, is that there is a big problem with current punitive practices such as zero tolerance. There is a plethora of research indicating that it is not only ineffective, it can make matters worse. Consequently, alternative approaches are needed in schools to help make positive differences for students and school climates. Restorative Justice Practices (RJP) are one alternative approach known to accomplish this goal.

“California Legislature recognizes that vulnerable groups of student groups are receiving the brunt of all discipline removals in California” The California AB 1729 legislation, which reads:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following: (a) The public policy of this state is to ensure that school discipline policies and practices support the creation of safe, positive, supportive, and equitable school environments where pupils can learn, and; (b) “The overuse of school suspension and expulsion undermines the public policy of this state and does not result in safer school environments or improved pupil behavior. Moreover, such highly punitive, exclusionary practices are associated with lower academic achievement, lower academic achievement, lower graduation rates, and a worse overall school climate (c) Failing to teach and develop social and behavior skills in pupils leads to the depletion of funding through decreased average daily attendance,

increases rates of teacher turnover, and increased pupil dropout rates. (d) School suspension and expulsion are disproportionately imposed on pupils of color, pupils with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender pupils, and other vulnerable pupil populations. (e) In 2006, the suspension rate of African American elementary and secondary pupils in this state was more than double the rate of suspensions for White Hispanic, and Asian pupils, and there is no evidence demonstrating that pupils of color or other pupil populations misbehave at greater rates than their peers. (f) Research has found that non-punitive classroom discipline and in-school discipline strategies are more effective and efficient than suspension and expulsion for addressing the majority of pupil misconduct. (g) The public policy of this state is to provide effective interventions for pupils who engage in acts of problematic behavior to help them change their behavior and avoid exclusion from school. (h) The public policy of this state is to ensure that school discipline policies and practices are implemented and enforced evenhandedly and are not disproportionately applied to any class or group of pupils. (i) The intent of this act is to clarify existing law on school discipline and ensure the discretion of superintendents of schools and principals to implement school discipline policies and practices other than school suspension and expulsion.

48900.5. (b) Other means of correction include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) A conference between school personnel, the pupils parent or

guardian, and the pupil. (2) Referrals to the school counselor, psychologist, social worker, child welfare attendance personnel, or other school support service personnel for case management and counseling. (3) Study teams, guidance teams, resource panel teams, or other intervention- related teams that assess the behavior, and develop and implement individualized plans to address the behavior in partnership with the pupil and his or her parents. (4) Referral for a comprehensive psychosocial or psycho-educational assessment, including for purposes of creating an individualized education program, or a plan adopted pursuant to Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 794 (a)). (5) Enrollment in a program for teaching pro-social behavior or anger management. (6) Participation in a restorative justice program. (7) A positive behavior support approach with tiered interventions that occur during the school day on campus (AB 1729- Fact Sheet, 2013).

History of Restorative Justice Practices in the Criminal Justice Context

According to Zehr (2015) the restorative justice approach was born in the 1970s in response to weaknesses that existed in the Western legal system, such as the realization that punishment is ineffective. The initial purpose was to address the needs of victims, while holding offenders accountable for their crime. The aim was to make offenders accountable for the harm they had caused and offer them an opportunity to repair the harm. In addition, the approach helps the victim heal from the harm that had been done to them and allows them an

opportunity to grieve, tell their stories and have their questions answered. Howard Zehr is widely known as an “early pioneer” in the field of restorative justice. According to Vaandering (2011) his work created a paradigm shift in understanding justice, and acknowledged that the purpose of justice is to address the needs of the victim. Acknowledgment requires the offender to be accountable for the actions that resulted in harm.

Vaandering (2011) further argues that Howard Zehr’s paradigm shift involved the movement of the focus from addressing the “inanimate laws” and “rules being broken” to addressing the harm that was caused involving, not only the victim, but also the “stakeholders” (p. 311). The author suggested that this perspective also draws upon indigenous cultural traditions that honor and respect community involvement. Vaandering (2011) argued that community involvement for addressing conflict in an “interwoven cultural milieu” focuses on finding ways to address conflict through community interconnectedness, while learning from the wisdom of the community members (p. 311). Furthermore, the indigenous tradition of community involvement for addressing conflict exemplifies the restorative justice philosophy as a “way of being” when responding to harm (p. 311).

Zehr (2015) reported that the restorative justice philosophy encompasses a vision that includes healing of relationships, awareness of the impact of negative actions on others, including actions that negatively impact the environment; taking responsibility and acknowledging that actions can negatively

impact others; repairing the harm by facing the problem and the victim; respecting those who have been harmed or who have harmed someone; involving those who may have been affected by decisions by including them in the decision-making process; listening with compassion and attempting to understand whether or not you agree with what is being said; engaging in difficult dialogue and keeping an open mind for learning from the dialogue; being careful not to impose personal views on others; and confronting injustices with sensitivity. Furthermore, restorative justice offers an opportunity for all those who have a stake in a situation that involves harm or conflict, and are invited to participate in dialogue that addresses the needs of everyone involved (Zehr, 2015).

Other countries have been inspired by the enormous success that New Zealand was having with the restorative approach in their juvenile justice system. Notably, other states have implemented the program in their criminal justice system as well. Reports indicate that Canada, Australia, and the United States all have a long history of implementation. In fact, Canada and New Zealand seemed to have implemented around the same time. However, literature shows that New Zealand appears to be the first country to implement the practices in their schools (Winslade et al., 2003). Pilot projects of restorative justice practices are now evolving around the world and there has been a rising tide of interest globally in response to a significant increase in prison populations.

According to Wearmouth, McKinney and Glenn (2007) restorative justice practices, specifically victim-offender conferencing, is currently being developed in several countries around the world. According to research, many parts of the world such as, North America, New Zealand, Australia and Europe have been developing this component of restorative justice. Restorative justice practices is an approach that focuses on “putting things right” between all involved in a “wrong-doing” by shifting the focus of responsibility to communities, rather than focusing solely on individuals (p. 196). Wearmouth et al. (2007) argue that the notion of community involvement in restorative justice is based on the belief that culture and family influence individuals and shape the way students behave in school. Wearmouth et al. (2007) further argue that, when students receive support from their family and community, it can encourage more socially acceptable behavior. The process involves a high level of respect with all participants involved. In New Zealand, restorative conferencing was influenced by the Maori tradition of responding to a wrongdoing. The Maori stand firm on the notion that restoration of broken relationships, require everyone who was involved and impacted by the wrong-doing and believe that in order for healing to occur, each person must be heard (Wearmouth, McKinney & Glenn, 2007).

The restorative justice philosophy has found an echo in narrative therapy principles, which began with work in family therapy and then extended to school counseling and conflict resolution. The narrative perspective emphasizes, “The person is not the problem; the problem is the problem” (Winslade & Williams,

2012, p. 16). Winslade and Williams (2012) argue that narrative school counselors have utilized this technique as a therapeutic approach to navigate around totalizing descriptions of humans that are known to be harmful to identity. Totalizing descriptions can include names such as bully, troublemaker, at risk, and so forth. The premise of narrative therapy is that people respond to the stories that they tell about themselves and others. If one's story has resulted in deficit thinking, then it can negatively impact identity and one's relationships with others. Narrative practices assume that people and relationships are made up of multiple narratives that offer multiple possibilities, rather than a single narrative that narrows possibilities. New or alternative stories can be mapped out and planned as a resolution to the problem story. Narrative therapy perspectives such as externalizing conversations, mapping the effects of the problem, double listening, and deconstruction, are now incorporated in many of the current restorative justice programs (Winslade & Williams, 2012).

Winslade et al. (2003) asserted that the restorative model views crime as an interpersonal problem between a victim and offender. Whereas, the retributive justice model views crime as a violation against the school, the restorative justice model views crime as one person violating another. Restorative justice advocates argue that problems begin within relationships and believe that crime is primarily an offense against people and not primarily against the school or the state. Relationships are damaged when a crime occurs and, therefore, the relationship must be mended. Restorative justice practices offer

support in mending broken relationships and healing communities after a crime or an offense has been committed. Consequently, crimes create negative relationships, and healing, therefore, needs to happen for everyone, not just for one side (Winslade et al., 2003).

How Can Restorative Justice Make a Difference?

Restorative justice practices are known as an “empathy-based philosophy” that has been successful in the juvenile justice arena, which is gaining the attention of schools around the globe (Mullet, 2014, p. 157). Research indicates that empathy and relationships are vital components of the restorative justice philosophy. Restorative justice practices view harm done to relationships and discipline as an opportunity for healing for everyone involved affected by the harmful act (Mullet, 2014).

There is a plethora of literature indicating that punishment can exacerbate problems in schools. The restorative justice approach is gaining attention as an intervention and preventative measure that gives power and voice to those who have been harmed by empowering victims and providing space for healing. Furthermore, it allows an opportunity for the offender to hear the pain caused by the harmful act, which allows space to foster empathy. Mullet (2014) argues that when the offender hears the pain caused in direct reflection of the offensive action, there is a better chance that the offender will make better choices in the future (Mullet, 2014, p.158).

Fostering Caring Climates and Making Things Right

The goal of restorative justice is to “make things right,” according to Mullet, (2014). However, fostering a “caring climate” is also significant, because it helps prevent further harm from taking place. Furthermore, restorative justice is a value-based discipline approach that is a positive practice that fosters healthy relationships and helps build a philosophy for caring, empathy, and giving back, rather than traditional disciplinary practices that are known to be ineffective.

Mullet (2014) argues that caring school climates are created by helping people feel better, not making them feel worse, because when they “feel better” they “do better” (p. 159). Researchers suggest that restorative justice is not a method, but a philosophy that focuses on values and principles that help guide educators in their practices. However, there is evidence indicating that buy-in from educators to the restorative justice philosophy is not a simple endeavor. Mullet (2014) further argued that one reason for this is because it is not a scripted program that can be applied across groups, which can make educators anxious. Furthermore, the one thing about restorative justice practices that can be certain is that, “The affected community collaboratively decides what needs to be done to stop misbehavior, teach pro-social alternatives, motivate change in thought and action, attend to the needs of affected individuals, and build just social structures” (p. 159).

One question raised by Mullet (2014) argued: “If restorative justice is not a one size fits all, approach to dealing with conflict, then how is effectiveness and

worth assessed?” Since restorative justice practices are considered a new field of study according to researchers, focus on suspensions and dropout rates including surveys for assessing school climate have been utilized to measure effectiveness and worth. Mullet (2014) argues that more rigorous research is needed to measure effectiveness and worth and suggests that qualitative research on this topic can help discover the complexities and nuances of the learning nature of restorative justice practices (Mullet, 2014, p.159).

Origin and History of Restorative Justice in New Zealand

Originating from indigenous cultural traditions, restorative justice practices emerged in the 1970s as an alternative solution to help communities heal from harm by focusing on needs of those who have been harmed and the obligations of those who inflicted the harm (Vaandering, 2014; Zehr, 2005). According to the New Zealand Practice Manual (2000) the theory of Restorative Practices is not new. The Maori and ancient biblical people played a significant role in its development through cultural customs and traditions throughout history. The Maori, for example, practiced something called “marae justice” for the purpose of healing in “non-adversarial forms” (p. 16). The offender’s community is called the “whanau” and the primary concern is that all parties involved and affected by an incident supported the victim in the healing process. However, the rise in the implementation of retributive justice diminished these practices for the Maori. According to the New Zealand Practice Manual (2000) the first restorative justice process in the criminal justice system, occurred in 1974 in Elmira, Ontario. The

case involved two men that vandalized twenty-two properties and met face-to-face with the victims. The first RJ project occurred in Indiana in 1977-78 and more than one thousand projects have been developed in the United States since then. After spreading to Africa, Canada, Europe, New Zealand and Australia, restorative justice practices are now considered a worldwide movement. The current models of restorative justice being implemented are those that adopt the “communitarian” approach to the criminal process (p. 17). According to the New Zealand Practice Manual (2000) Family Group Conferences for young offenders became a law in New Zealand in 1989. The elements of this process involve “offender accountability” and “family empowerment” combined with community involvement as a response to criminal behavior that supports the healing process. The Maori-inspired family group conferences later became a common practice of the youth juvenile justice system for the entire New Zealand population in 1989. It was titled the “Children, Young Persons and their Families Act” (p. 1). This type of practice later became mandated into the child welfare and youth justice system.

During the late 1970s, there was a shift in the juvenile justice system in New Zealand that involved the Maori. The current laws were said to violate Maori values and traditions, and consequently, were damaging Maori society. Subsequently, many Maori children were being removed from their homes. The Children and Young Person’s Act of 1974 was revised as a result. The changes in legislation led lawmakers in New Zealand to respect the Maori tradition of

involving families in decision-making and the families were eventually seen as “preferable professionals” (p. 17). This movement is what had inspired the juvenile justice system to utilize restorative justice practices, such as conferencing, as a means to reduce criminal behavior. The success of restorative justice practices in the juvenile justice arena, led to the adoption of these practices in the educational arena. According to Vaandering (2014) the practitioners involved in adopting these practices and principles in schools are reporting a significant improvement within school cultures (p. 510).

While increased suspensions and expulsions, due to harsh punitive practices, continue to be problematic in schools around the world, new perspectives on handling problematic behavior and resolving interpersonal conflict have been highlighted in recent studies. Reports show that several school districts throughout California are now implementing the multi-tiered restorative practices and procedures as an alternative to exclusionary discipline such as zero-tolerance. Neustatter (2004) argues that RP is useful for solving multiple issues that arise in school, including “name-calling, vandalism, theft, assault, teacher-pupil conflict and non-attendance” (p. 1).

Vaandering, (2014) argued that RP is a relational approach being “promoted as a promising initiative to address discipline gaps that build(s) trusting, supportive relationships between students and educators” (p. 509). Furthermore, reports show that RP has the potential to reduce suspensions and narrow the gap on the school-to-prison pipeline. Wilson (2013) reported,

“Several states throughout the United States have successfully implemented restorative practices and have seen significant improvements in suspension rates, graduation rates, and school performance; and, most important, children are kept out of the juvenile justice system” (p. 144).

According to Vaandering (2014) restorative practices are a “comprehensive relational framework” and is more than just “another approach in education, it is as elusive as explaining the organic, sacred process of growth that occurs within a seed when given optimum soil, water, light and warmth” (p. 509). Harber and Salkade (2009) supported the notion of a “promising initiative” by arguing, “Relational restorative justice informs critical, democratic, dialogic professional development to support transformative peace-building education in schools that otherwise are often governed by rules rather than relationships and fear rather than peace” (p. 175).

Research indicates that New Zealand is the leading country of RP in schools worldwide (Boyak, 2000). It is unclear as to specifically why New Zealand began implementation of restorative justice practices in schools. However, there is a general assumption that it began in response to a rise in suspensions, truancies, and concerns about the fate of youth offenders, and disciplinary practices at school. The initial hope was that conferencing would help reduce suspensions. Pilot projects of RP implementation in various schools around New Zealand showed an approximate 25% reduction in suspensions during the first few months. Furthermore, the project resulted in high participant

satisfaction. However, according to reports, it is unclear as to how many schools have bought in to the idea. What is clear in the literature is that RP is becoming increasingly popular and is gaining momentum throughout New Zealand schools.

Restorative Practices in Schools

There are a limited number of approaches available for schools to improve school culture, address behavioral issues, and decrease suspensions and expulsions. According to Myer and Evans (2012) restorative practices have their origin in the concept of Restorative Justice (RJ) in the “criminal justice system” (p. 6). Zehr (1990) argued that the Restorative Justice focus is based on the perspective that offenses are “interpersonal conflicts” that occur between a victim and offender (p. 26). Furthermore, according to Myer and Evans (2012) retribution and punishment has historically been emphasized in most criminal justice systems. RJ approaches, however, were pivotal for the criminal justice system, as it focused on “restoration” rather than on punishment (p. 6). Although the RJ concept is based on restoration, it does not mean that there are no consequences in the criminal justice system. The offenders often still receive fines and time in jail or prison, but they are given an opportunity to repair the harm they have done and heal the conflict and relationships. Similar principles are now being incorporated into schools, but most refer to it as “Restorative Practices” (RP), rather than “Restorative Justice” (RJ) (Myer & Evans, 2012. p. 6).

According to research, restorative practices have the potential to improve student relationships, classroom culture, and school climate. Furthermore, it has the potential to decrease office referrals, truancy, detentions, suspensions, expulsions, decrease disciplinary problems and dropout rates, improve student attitudes, and reduce the school-to-prison pipeline. Reports further indicate that, in the United States, the highest number, proportionately of students getting suspended, are African-American males. Notably, students who are getting suspended are usually those in most need of professional help and adult supervision. Studies further indicate that students who are suspended have a greater likelihood of dropping out of school than those in the general school population. Winslade et al. (2014) asserted that suspended students are “five times more likely to repeat a grade” (p. 8).

Literature points out that schools need to recognize the significance of support from families and community groups when dealing with student behavioral problems. Wearmouth, McKinney and Glynn (2007) argue that the “inclusive” principles of the restorative justice approach, support the goal of the national government for adopting the principle of universal education and equal opportunity that supports individuals’ rights to an education, which traditional school discipline is known to impede (p. 196).

The emphasis of this non-punitive approach highlights the development of positive relationships, rather than punishment (Winslade & Williams, 2012). Postmodern approaches, argue that punitive measures do not work when

seeking effective alternatives to negative behavior (Winslade, 2013).

Furthermore, RP is a cost-effective alternative approach that enhances and builds relationships between students, staff and parents, improves student behavior, reduces violence and bullying and creates a sense of community according to the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) (2011).

Recent literature is pointing to several reasons why schools are beginning to embrace RP as an alternative approach to discipline.

Fronius, Persson, Guckenburg, Hurley and Petrosino (2016) noted the following reasons why schools are beginning to embrace RP in the U.S.:

- Zero-tolerance policies have led to larger numbers of youths being “pushed out” (suspended or expelled) with no evidence of positive impact on school safety (Losen, 2014).
- There is racial/ethnic disparity in what youths receive school punishments and how severe their punishments are, even when controlling for the type of offense (Skiba et al., 2002).
- More school misbehavior is being handed over to the police (particularly with programs that have police in schools, such as School Resource Officers), leading to more youth getting involved with official legal systems - thus contributing to a trend toward a “school-to-prison pipeline” (Petrosino, Guckenburg, & Fronius, 2012).

- Research strongly links suspension and other school discipline to failure to graduate (Losen, 2014).

Restorative Practices in New Zealand

This international perspective on restorative practices in New Zealand was worthy of investigation, because it is the leading country in the development of restorative practices in schools worldwide (Boyack, 2000). Furthermore, there is currently a project underway to train every secondary school in New Zealand in RP and to evaluate it. One of the participants in this study, Dr. Wendy Drewery, from the University of Waikato, currently has a large contract to conduct this service delivery. Due to the increase in suspensions and expulsions, American schools are in need of innovative programs that provide safe school environments and help students remain in school and continue learning. The emphasis of this non-punitive approach highlights the development of positive relationships, rather than punishment (Winslade & Williams, 2012).

Furthermore, restorative practices are a cost-effective alternative approach that enhances and builds relationships between students, staff and parents, improves student behavior, reduces violence and bullying and creates a sense of community according to the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) (2011). RP has been utilized as a response to offending behaviors in schools to heal relationships, improve school climate and culture, and help students with their struggles so that they will succeed in school. RP is very popular in New Zealand, and the country has been successful with utilizing

this method to help students through their problems, rather than punishing and shaming them. America has also been slowly implementing RP in schools as an alternative response to punishment.

A recent report written for the Office of Civil Rights U.S. Department of Education (2014) stated, “Restorative practices are making a positive difference for students, teachers/staff, and schools, build strong community schools, and reduce racial disparities in discipline and academic achievement” (p. 1). The report went on to say, “Whole school restorative justice and peer restorative justice models, offer a promising alternative to suspension” (p. 2). Drewery (2013) argues, “Restorative practice is a form of cooperative problem-solving which can create citizens for a more just society” (p. 209).

The Restorative Practices Movement

Since the late 1990s there has been a movement worldwide that is working toward implementation of RP in schools. Vaandering (2014) argues that the restorative approach was initially utilized to address serious behavior problems and crime within schools that resulted in a decrease in suspensions and expulsions. However, the notion of healing social interpersonal conflict within relationships is surfacing as a key element to the approach that is gaining the attention of institutions and is now being recognized as a “comprehensive and proactive” triangle (p. 511). The relationship triangle begins at the bottom layer with (people as humans not objects) including core values and beliefs. The next layer involves (building) check-ins, ups, and outs; cooperative learning,

curriculum; pedagogy, and environment. The next layer moving toward the top involves (maintaining) problem solving; informal chats; small groups; and classroom meetings. The top layer, (repairing), involves full conferencing (Vaandering, 2014, p. 511).

The restorative model also includes a three-tier hierarchy that begins at the bottom with a universal approach to repairing harm through social and emotional skills programs. The middle layer involves the targeted approach such as classroom, small group, and individual conferences. Finally, the top layer involves intensive conferencing and mediation. The bottom tier involves a whole school approach to re-affirming relationships through developing social and emotional skills; the middle tier involves repairing relationships; and the top tier involves re-building relationships (Morrison, 2004).

Relationships First

Amstutz and Mullet (2015) argue that relationships need to be the focus when harm has been done, rather than rules and discipline. It only takes one incident to create a problem in a community. Restorative conversations address the harm that has been done and help heal all involved and affected by harmful behavior. The goal of restorative conversations is not only to heal and make things right, but to prevent problems from reoccurring in the future as well. According to Amstutz and Mullet (2015) there are many schools implementing the restorative justice approach without the term being utilized in their policies. An example of this was highlighted by Howard Zehr (2015) indicating that one

school has policy guidelines that allow “flexibility” in using the restorative justice approach for certain incidents (p. 43).

Teacher-Student Relationships

Relationships between teachers and students have widely been a concern for educators for many years. Researchers have agreed, however, that positive relationships between students and teachers can function as a developmental asset for learning (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Positive teacher-student relationships can also help with a multitude of other factors, and the significance of these relationships continue to impact student academic success from kindergarten to high school. Furthermore, studies have shown that positive student-teacher relationships have an impact on student performance and positive self-efficacy.

There is a wealth of literature pointing to a strong correlation between positive teacher-student interpersonal relationships and academic performance. Evidence shows that positive teacher-student relationships are fundamental for academic engagement, achievement, and motivation (Averill, 2011; Skinner & Pitzer, 2014). Positive relationships with teachers not only support students’ learning, but can also help marginal students, behavioral at risk students, and those at risk for academic failure (Beyazkurk & Kesner, 2005; Hamre & Pianta, 2006; McCormick, O’Connor, Cappella & McClowry, 2013; Muller, 2001). Notably, supportive and effective teacher-student relationships influence student engagement and academic achievement.

Averill (2011) noted that students who see their teachers as “caring” are more likely to have “positive academic attitudes, motivation, and engagement” (p.75). Averill (2011) conducted a study including six teachers and Year 10 classes from mid-low socioeconomic secondary schools in New Zealand. Findings indicated that “caring teacher-student relationships” enhance “learning” and maximize “motivation and achievement” (p. 78). Although this study utilized Maori perspectives, the researcher highlighted that it may inform other cultures about the significance of relating the human condition and interpersonal relationships as it pertains to learning environments. Averill (2011) went on to say that caring classroom environments have been linked to “cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and dispositional aspects of learning” (p. 79).

Another study examined a cross-cultural perspective on the significance of interpersonal relationships with teachers, utilizing the framework of Bowlby’s attachment theory. This study indicated that teacher-child relationships developed similarly to those of parent-child attachments (Beyazkurk & Kesner, 2005).

Bowlby’s framework was utilized to explain the interpersonal dynamics of the teacher-student relationship and how it impacted student learning.

There are a multitude of other studies proving a correlation between teacher-student relationships and improved academic achievement, including lower rates of emotional distress, suicidal ideation, suicidal behavior, violence, and substance abuse, which further emphasizes the significance of the relationship (Hamre & Pianta, 2006). Research suggests that the need for this attachment and

the significance for a positive relationship with students and teachers continue as children mature (p. 49). For example, when a student transitions to elementary school to junior high, and junior high school to high school, the need for teacher-student interpersonal relationships continues to be significant. This further exemplifies what researchers call developmental systems theory. Sabol and Pianta (2012) asserted that developmental systems theory has been utilized as a foundational conceptual model for research involving relationships between teachers and children and explains how the components of the teacher-child relationship is embedded in multilevel interactions between a student and the context of a relationship that develops over time (Sabol and Pianta, 2012; Hamre and Pianta, 2006).

Purpose of Restorative Practices

The purpose of restorative practices is to help students take responsibility for their actions and support them through resolving personal issues and conflict with others (Neustatter, 2004). Pavelka (2013) argues that the restorative approach addresses the needs of the person harmed as well as the school community after an offense has taken place. The offender is given an opportunity to make the wrongs right through peaceful resolution that helps repair the harm caused by the offending behavior. The core principles of restorative justice practices include repairing the harm, reducing risk, and empowering community. The approach enables administrators and teachers to work collaboratively toward solutions to disciplinary actions such as conflict,

misbehavior, bullying, and criminal activity. According to Pavelka (2013) the four most popular restorative justice practices are peer mediation, peer/accountability boards, conferencing and circles.

Restorative Practices are specifically mentioned in the California AB 1729 legislation. This method is not designed to solve all problems and is not intended to be a panacea. The purpose of the approach is based on a whole-school approach dynamic to relationship building and restoring, as a response to harmful behaviors and offenses: “Restorative intervention practices aim to build social capital, by involving the entire school community in a process that seeks to understand, repair and prevent harmful behavior” as cited in Hamilton (2008, p. 5).

Furthermore, “Restorative Practices” are a set of formal and informal processes designed to build relationships and a sense of community. It is a set of processes to involve, “to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense to collectively identify and address harms, needs and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible” (Zehr, 2015, p. 7). The distinction of the restorative approach is viewing the restorative practices philosophy from a lens of a whole-school commitment for changing cultural discourses that are suggested to impede positive school climate and culture. Furthermore, the approach aims to improve the “quality of relationships” for all stakeholders and pursue innovative best practices for “learning and teaching,” in order to improve the “relationships in the classroom and beyond,” rather than an

occasional tool that is utilized to solely address problematic behavior (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013, p.11). The goal of restorative practices is to create a safer environment for students to learn, minimize office referrals, transform negative behavior by rebuilding and restoring relationships, and maintain productive, healthy learning environments for students, so that they will stay in school.

It is important to note that previous literature on the negative impact of discipline practices does not emphasize the elimination of disciplinary practices entirely from schools. As noted by Lokanan (2009), “An effort should be made to embrace and not eliminate punishment” altogether from schools (p. 289). As further noted by Winslade and Williams (2012) discipline practices such as zero-tolerance “may even prove to be more effective if used in combination with a range of other approaches. However, on current evidence, they are less effective on their own” (p. 6).

Valdebenito et al. (2015) reported, what has not been examined in previous literature are the new intervention strategies that are being implemented in schools and the impact they have on expulsion rates. Evidence points to the conclusion that, “There has been no previous meta-analysis aimed at assessing the effectiveness of interventions (that is, different types of approaches) for reducing disciplinary school exclusion” (p. 4). According to the authors, the only study that has been conducted with a similar focus included a “meta-analysis on the effectiveness of mediation programs in educational settings” (p. 4). However,

the authors further noted that this particular study should be cautioned for “high heterogeneity of primary results” (p. 5).

Not a Panacea

The RP approach is not designed to solve all problems and is not intended to be a panacea (Winslade & Williams, 2012). The purpose of the program is based on a whole-school dynamic approach to relationship building and restoring in response to harmful behaviors and offenses that threaten them. Hamilton (2008) noted, “Restorative Justice Intervention practices aim to build social capital, by involving the entire school community in a process that seeks to understand, repair and prevent harmful behavior” (p. 5) (See also Morrison, Blood & Thorsborne, 2005).

According to Zehr (2015) Restorative Justice Practices (RJP) is a set of formal and informal processes designed to build relationships and a sense of community. The emphasis of RP in schools is viewing the philosophy from a lens of a whole-school commitment for changing cultural discourses that are suggested to impede positive school climate and culture. The approach aims to improve the “quality of relationships” for all stakeholders and pursues innovative best practices for “learning and teaching” in order to improve the “relationships in the classroom and beyond,” rather than an occasional tool that is solely utilized to address problematic behavior (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013, p.11). The goal of RP is to create a safer environment for students to learn, minimize office referrals, transform negative behavior by rebuilding and restoring relationships,

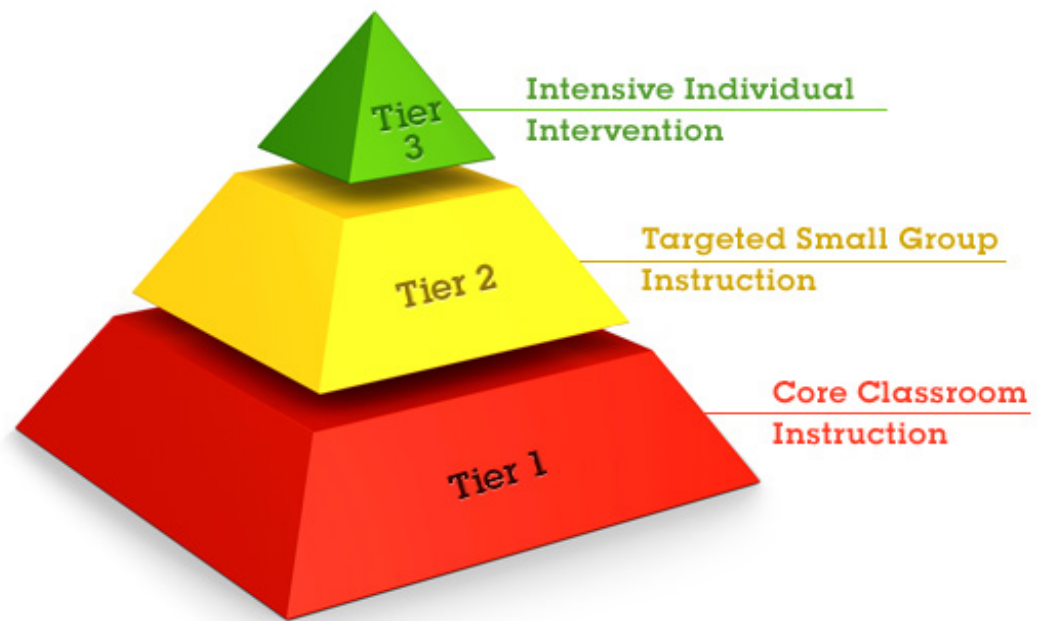
and maintain productive, healthy learning environments for students, so that they will stay in school. “RP intervention practices aim to build social capital, by involving the entire school community in a process that seeks to understand, repair and prevent harmful behavior” (Hamilton, 2008, p.5).

The Response-to-Intervention Model

According to Shapiro (2012), “The heart of any Response-to-Intervention (RTI) model lies in the use of tiered instructional processes” (p. 1). RTI was part of the “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 as an alternative evaluation procedure.” It is a “process to provide access to needed interventions, and to help identify children with disabilities” (Turse & Albrecht, 2015, p. 84). There are two goals for RTI: (1) evidence-based intervention delivery, and (2) use of the response from students to the interventions to “determine instructional needs and intensity” (p. 85). The three-tiered model provided early intervention and validity in identifying children with disabilities in need. The model became a continuum model for other school intervention and prevention programs, such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Restorative Practices (RP).

The purpose of the bottom tier in both PBIS and RP programs is a universal approach that involves school-classroom-wide systems and activities for all students such as, relational practices, circles, routines, respect for agreements, and questioning strategies. The middle tier is a more targeted approach for students who do not respond to first tier interventions and offers

additional support in managing difficulties, such as repairing relationships, problem solving and circles. The top tier is an intensive intervention approach that involves the smallest population of the school, such as at-risk students and incidents that are in need of sustained and targeted interventions. Table 1 shows the continuum three-tiered model that schools use for academic and behavioral interventions and preventions. According to Turse and Albrecht (2015) the visual three-tiered model “saves resources” as it places students in a category that is most fitting for their particular needs. Furthermore, the RTI model is a relatively “new concept in education” (p. 87). As such, more research is needed to determine “efficacy of RTI” as it is a “work in progress” (p. 88).



RTI (Response To Intervention)

3 Tiers of Support

Figure 1

Response-to-Intervention Model

There are three levels of response within the RTI pyramid. The first tier is at the base of the pyramid and involves the whole school dynamic of positive behavioral expectations. The interventions at this level of the tier involve the following:

- Proactive Prevention
- Building Community
- Relationship Building

- Restorative Conversations
- Classroom Circles
- Circle Conversations
- Social-Emotional Understanding & Skills

The second tier above the whole school intervention of RP involves individualized intervention with particular individuals. The following is a list of RP instances that would require the second tier approach:

- Reparative Interventions
- Restorative Discipline
- Undercover Anti-Bullying Teams
- Circle Conversations
- Restorative Conversations
- Welcome Circles
- Peer Mediation
- Restorative Conferences

Tier three of the pyramid involves intensive interventions with individuals who may have responded positively, but the first two tiers of intervention may not be enough, and may require the following interventions of RP:

- Restorative Conferences
- Re-entry Interventions
- Circles of support & accountability
- Peer Juries

Each level offers a response to situations that are “deemed problematic and disruptive for school environments” (Winslade, Espinoza, Myers, & Yzaguirre, 2014, p. 22).

The goal of RP is to create a safer environment for students to learn, minimize office referrals, transform negative behavior by rebuilding and restoring relationships, and maintain productive, healthy learning environments for students, so that they will remain in school. The U.S Department of Education (2014) wrote:

Schools must be both safe and supportive for effective teaching and learning to take place. Three key principles can guide efforts to create such productive learning environments. First, work in a deliberate fashion to develop positive and respectful school climates and prevent student misbehavior before it occurs. Ensure that clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations and consequences are in place to prevent and address misbehavior. And finally, use data and analysis to continuously improve and ensure fairness and equity for all students. (p. 2)

The U.S. Department of Education (2014) further outlined the following principles: Principle (1) Climate and Prevention: “Schools that foster positive school climates can help to engage all students in learning by preventing problem behaviors and intervening effectively to support struggling and at-risk students” (p. 2). Principle (2): Expectations and Consequences: “Schools that have discipline policies or codes of conduct with clear, appropriate, and

consistently applied expectations and consequences will help students improve behavior, increase engagement, and boost achievement” (p. 3). And finally, Principle (3): Equity and Continuous Improvement: “Schools that build staff capacity and continuously evaluate the school’s discipline policies and practices are more likely to ensure fairness and equity and promote achievement for all students” (p. 4).

Conferencing

Wearmouth, McKinney and Glynn (2007) asserted that conferencing has a long history in New Zealand that began with the Maori tradition called “hui” (p. 197). According to Wearmouth et al. (2007) hui involves a meeting within the Maori iwi (tribe). The following exemplifies the process of a restorative conference in New Zealand;

1. As appropriate, a conference will begin with karakia (a prayer-like invocation) and mihi mihi/greetings, which acknowledge the presence and dignity of all in attendance.
2. ‘The problem is the problem, the person is not the problem’ is written on the board or is spoken about.
3. ‘What are you hoping to see happen in this hui (meeting)?’ Each person has a chance to speak.
4. ‘What is the problem that has brought us here?’ People tell their versions.
5. ‘What are the effects of that problem on all present (and others)?’

6. 'What times, places and relationships do we know of where the problem is not present?'
7. 'What new description of the people involved becomes clear as we look at the times and places where the problem is not present?'
8. 'If there have been people/things harmed by the problem, what is it that you need to happen to see amends be made?'
9. 'How does what we have spoken about and seen in the alternative descriptions help us plan to overcome the problem?' People contribute ideas and offers of resources that help overcome the problem.
10. 'Does that plan meet the needs of anyone harmed by the problem?'
11. People are given responsibility to carry each part of the plan forward. Any follow up is planned for.
12. Karakia (prayers) and thanks, and perhaps hospitality, are offered (p. 197).

According to Pavelka, (2013) conferencing involves a group of participants that include family, friends, the victim, offender, and key supporters. The conference is typically conducted by a trained facilitator who supports the group and guides them through discussion about the harm caused by the offending behavior. According to Pavelka, conferencing usually takes longer to reach a resolution than other processes of restorative justice, such as circles and peer mediation (Pavelka, 2013, p. 15).

There are a multitude of approaches that connect victims and offenders in dialogue. Family Group Conferencing (FGC) is another approach that began in New Zealand and was later adopted in Australia. This model involves “family, friends, community members, and sometimes justice personnel” (p. 17). The model originated in New Zealand to reduce the overcrowding of Maori youth in the juvenile justice system. In this approach, Maori values are emphasized, such as the involvement of family and community in the restorative process. Amstutz (2009) reported, however, that since the law has been enacted and FGC has been implemented into the juvenile justice system, there has been a significant decrease in serious crimes. Amstutz (2009) wrote: “Since implementing FGC, juvenile judges have reported 80 percent fewer cases of murder and manslaughter” (p. 17).

Amstutz (2009) contends that the Western societal belief in individualism impedes the process of restorative justice, because it differs from the dominating worldview on the significance of community and “oneness with others” (p. 21). However, according to Amstutz (2009) restorative justice “processes” and “framework” have come a long way (p. 20). Amstutz (2009) wrote; the following value statements have helped guide the work at The Office on Justice & Peace building at Mennonite Central Committee:

- All people should be treated with dignity and respect, recognizing that each person has some piece of the truth.

- Each of us needs to be responsible for our own actions and needs to be held accountable for those actions.
- By our presence we are all members of communities and, therefore, connected to one another.
- We recognize that forgiveness is a process that allows all people to walk at their own pace.
- We provide opportunities for reconciliation as appropriate and as defined by those affected by the actions of others (p. 20).

Circles

According to Pranis (2005) circles are a way of collaborating with others that spawned from Native American tradition that involved sitting around a campfire and passing around a talking piece. This idea is now being utilized in Western civilization as a way of resolving conflict by addressing the complex multicultural dimensions of democracy and inclusivity. Pranis (2005) wrote the following:

We're all lovers and we're all destroyers. We're all frightened and at the same time we all want terribly to trust. This is part of the struggle. We have to help what is most beautiful to emerge in us and to divert the powers of darkness and violence. I learn to be able to say, "This is my fragility. I must learn about it and use it in a constructive way." ~Jean Vanier (p. 3)

According to Pranis (2005) the circle process basically involves storytelling. The idea of this process is based on the notion that everyone has a story to tell and in every story, there are lessons that can be learned. The circle process involves stories that are meaningful to others and are shared to help “unite people in their common humanity” and “help them appreciate the depth of the human experience” (p. 4). Pavelka (2013) argues the circle process provides an opportunity for each individual to speak about the occurrence that has negatively affected them, and offers alternatives toward healing and restoration. Pavelka (2013) argued that circles have now expanded to include improving classroom environments, attending to problem resolution and engagement of conversation on challenging and difficult topics. Pranis (2005) wrote, “The philosophy of circles acknowledges that we are all in need of help and that helping others helps us at the same time” (p. 6). Peacemaking circles as described by Pranis (2005) “bring people together as equals” and provide space for people to talk about difficult and painful experiences during the circle conversation, and leave the conversation feeling lighter and more positive about themselves and others. The peacemaking circles draw upon the indigenous values of respect for the needs of others and respect for differences. Pranis (2005) wrote the following to describe the “ancient wisdom” of the peacemaking circle process:

- “Honors the presence and dignity of every participant”
- “Values the contributions of every participant”

- “Emphasizes the connectedness of all things”
- “Supports emotional and spiritual expression”
- “Gives equal voice to all” (p. 7).

Pranis (2005) declared that the following is an overview of the circle process:

- “Everyone is respected”
- “Everyone gets a chance to talk without interruption”
- “Participants explain themselves by telling their stories”
- “Everyone is equal-no person is more important than anyone else”
- “Spiritual and emotional aspects of individual experience are welcomed” (p. 8)

Pranis (2005) argued that peacemaking circles are most useful when two or more people:

- “Need to make decisions together”
- “Have a disagreement”
- “Need to address an experience that resulted in harm to someone”
- “Want to work together as a team”
- “Wish to celebrate”
- “Wish to share difficulties”
- “Want to learn from each other” (p. 8).

Pranis (2009) further argued that peacemaking circles are strong enough to hold the following: “anger; frustration; joy; pain; truth; conflict; diverse world views; intense feelings; silence; and paradox” (p. 9).

Undercover Anti-Bullying Teams

One RP-inspired approach, that is gaining attention around the world and becoming more popular as a useful response to healing bullying relationships is called, Undercover Anti-Bullying Teams (UABTs). According to Lillard (2015) schools worldwide are beginning to implement anti-bullying programs in order to raise awareness about the dangers of bullying. UABTs were influenced by Barbara Maines and George Robinson from the U.K. in the 1990s, and were later modified by Michael Williams, a counselor at a secondary school in New Zealand, with a narrative perspective. The approach has been gaining popularity as a restorative response to bullying behaviors in schools. Lillard (2015) reported in a recent study that schools in New Zealand and in the United States have shown enormous success with the approach. The study focused on the perspectives of practitioners in the field of restorative justice practices that have considerable experience working with UABTs. Lillard (2015) emphasized that UABTs may have the potential to “influence school climate,” while they decrease prevalence rates of bullying, and create “positive change for students personally and inside their classroom” (p. 1).

According to Lillard (2015) schools worldwide have been seeking answers to end the bullying epidemic. Consequently, numerous interventions and

preventative alternatives have been explored and implemented. The consequences of bullying are devastating for students. The worst-case scenario is that students end up taking their own lives or taking the lives of others, as seen in the Columbine school shooting of 1999. Furthermore, the psychological damage from bullying can be minimal or severe, depending on the severity of the abuse. Some experience a lifetime of suffering. Lillard (2015) argued, "School counselors are challenged by bullying on a regular basis, and need effective alternatives to punitive measures to combat bullying" (p. 1).

Lillard (2015) further argued that the UABT approach transforms the bullying relationship by including the two worst bullies in the UABT process, and including four other participants who are typically chosen by the victim; the other four participants then outnumber the bully, which makes it difficult for the bully not to participate in the process. All six participants are then invited to develop a plan that will make the victim's school experience more pleasant. The UABTs process includes the following five phases:

- 1) meeting with the victim
- 2) meeting with the team members
- 3) meeting with the victim to monitor progress over the course of the first few weeks
- 4) meeting with the team to monitor progress and make changes to the five-point plan
- 5) celebration of success (p. 1).

Lillard (2015) asserted that UABTs are a “unique approach” to addressing bullying issues in schools (p. 1). The purpose of the teams is to heal bullying relationships by rewriting the narrative of the victim and the bully. This is a no-blame approach that focuses on the problem, rather than on the person. Furthermore, it positively transforms bullying relationships, rather than “pathologizing” and “punishing” the bully, which is the traditional punitive response to dealing with bullying issues. Studies are finding, however, that the traditional type of response is only exacerbating the problem, by creating isolation and placing the victim in a vulnerable position for retribution (p. 1).

Lillard’s (2015) findings indicate that UABTs are an effective alternative approach to address bullying issues in schools. Some of the quotes from the participants included the following:

- 1) “It builds their self-esteem and confidence, because they have told me that the undercover team experience is the first time they have ever been nice in their life”
- 2) “You invite them to thrive in a situation where they can use their leadership skills in a form of doing something good for others, rather than harming others, and this allows these particular students to thrive”
- 3) “The bullies become the biggest defenders of the victim”
- 4) “Toward the end, they are the ones that are most proactive and active in the group”

- 5) "I think one of the reasons why undercover teams are so effective, is that they create a culture of bystander involvement"
- 6) "It is an intervention to change the culture"
- 7) "They have two functions (1) the teams stand in solidarity with the person being targeted and (2) the teams hold agents accountable"
- 8) "It is creating a culture that when bullying occurs, students have an opportunity to do something about it" (p. 1).

Lillard (2015) concludes that this was the first time that the voices of the practitioners, who utilize UABTs, as an approach to combating bullying relationships in schools, were reported. Lillard (2015) suggested that the findings of this project emphasize an effective alternative approach to school bullying to traditional disciplinary procedures that are known to exacerbate bullying problems, which may impede the quest to end the bullying epidemic (Lillard, 2015).

Restorative Justice Practices and the Oakland Unified School District

According to Jain, Bassey, Brown, and Kalra (2014) there has been substantial growth of schools in the Oakland Unified School District from 2005 to 2014 that have implemented whole-school restorative justice practices. During this period, almost half of approximately twenty-four schools had high implementation, which included two out of two elementary schools, six out of eleven middle schools and three out of nine high schools. Reports indicate that after a decade of restorative justice implementation in the Oakland Unified

School District, there is now sufficient data that supports the effectiveness of the program in reducing racial disparities and academic achievement, building strong community schools, reducing suspensions, and making a positive difference for students, teachers/staff, and schools (Jain, Bassey, Brown, & Kalra, 2014).

Furthermore, data shows that seventy eight per cent out of ninety of the OUSD staff reported practicing restorative practices said they were successful with implementation from what they learned from the RJ training. The OUSD implementation of the Whole School Restorative Justice (WSRJ) program and recently the Peer RJ Program has been reported as having success in reducing harm, building community, and ensuring re-integration of marginalized students leaving the juvenile justice system. The multi-tiered strategy of restorative practices has proven to be effective in changing school climate for OUSD since they began implementation in 2005 (Jain, Bassey, Brown, & Kalra, 2014).

Reports further support the fact that there has been a substantial reduction in suspensions among the schools in OUSD in comparison to the schools that have not yet adopted the implementation policy. Reports further suggested, that African Americans have a greater impact with restorative justice practices than other ethnicities. Jain, Bassey, Brown and Kalra (2014) argued that schools in OUSD reported reduced referrals for disruptive behavior, a considerable reduction in harm and conflict, greater ability to understand peers, manage emotions, resolve conflict with parents, improve home environment, and maintain positive relationships with peers. Similarly, over sixty percent of the

OUSD staff reported that restorative justice implementation in their school has helped reduce suspensions. Data further indicates that African Americans who were suspended for willful defiance and disruption has been reduced from 1,050 to 630, which is a forty percent decrease in a one-year period. There was also a significant decrease in suspensions for African Americans within that same year. The Black/White discipline gap in a one-year period was reduced from twenty-five percent to nineteen percent. Jain, Bassey, Brown and Kalra, (2014) argue that, with these statistics, OUSD is on the right track. There were also reports indicating improved academic outcomes for students and improvements in school climates.

OUSD has done a remarkable job of implementing restorative practices in the past ten years, as an alternative strategy to suspending students for minor behavior infractions. Particularly in the last three years, there has been substantial growth in a number of schools implementing RJ, staffing, capacity, and subsequent effect over time on reducing suspensions particularly for African American students, closing the discipline gap, and improving academic outcomes (reading levels, dropout rates, graduation rates) for schools and students participating in RJ vs. not. (Jain, Bassey, Brown & Kalra, 2014, p. 1)

Emotional Literacy and Shame

Neustatter (2004) argued that restorative justice is a philosophy that is often written into school policy and comes from the same place as “emotional

literacy” (p. 1). According to research, emotional literacy involves the ability to empathize and understand emotions and control emotions, in a manner that helps improve one’s quality of life and personal power, while improving the quality of relationships with others. Kelly and Thorsborne (2014) discuss the significance of emotional literacy in restorative justice practices by highlighting the seminal work of John Braithwaite (1989) and his theory of “reintegrative shaming” (p.73). Kelly and Thorsborne (2014) asserted that properly addressing shaming during restorative conferencing is vital for restorative justice practices. One of the goals of restorative conferencing is that the offending student feels shameful and remorseful about their action. However, if they internalize the shame, it can exacerbate the problem. Addressing the shame properly during a restorative conference is also very important for “motivating positive movement forward.” The authors argue that, during a restorative conference, shame must be “reintegrative” and not “stigmatizing” (p. 73). The offender must be shameful about the actions and not himself (Kelly & Thorsborne, 2014).

Vaandering (2011) further discussed the significance of the difference between stigmatizing and reintegrative shame, and how it can impact the outcome in both the victim and the offender. Vaandering (2011) argues that when a wrongdoing occurs, the emotion of shame is present and, if the shameful action is stigmatized, it can potentially increase the problems for the victim, the offender and the community. Furthermore, it is significant for educators to understand the difference between the two, because without the knowledge of

the difference between the two types of shaming, and considering its role in restorative justice, “power differentials” can result between students and teachers (p. 310).

Reintegrative Shaming Theory

Harris, Walgrave and Braithwaite (2004) argue that restorative justice interventions are consistent with the approach of reintegrative shaming theory. John Braithwaite’s theory is a practice that is useful for preventing crime and responding to crime after it has occurred. The premise of this theory is based on the idea that offenders can reintegrate back into the community after committing a crime. It is based on the notion that “social disapproval” such as “stigmatizing,” “out-casting,” “shaming,” and “treating the person as the problem” can only make matters worse (p. 192). According to Harris et al. (2004), reintegrative shaming theory implies that the two most critical emotions that emerge from social disapproval are shame and guilt. While restorative justice practices are becoming more “widespread,” Harris et al. (2004) argue that it is also becoming a more challenging subject for “theoretical reflection” and “evaluative research” (p. 192). Notably, emotions such as shame, guilt, empathy and remorse are the most critical to focus on for restoration and successful reintegration.

Additionally, Harris et al. (2004) reported that disapproval from others can cause individuals to question themselves, especially if it comes from someone they respect. Opinions from others can shape the way one views him/herself and the world. Harris et al. (2004) argued, “We expect to agree with them

because we trust their opinion and we have the same world view” (p. 194).

According to Harris et al. (2004) this phenomena is called “social validation” (p. 195). When there is conflict about what is right and what is wrong, we lean on the opinions of others to validate our beliefs. This notion contends that we are inclined to believe the opinions of others that most agree with our own social identities. Research indicates that social influence is stronger when it comes from others with similar social identities. The emotion of shame is derived from social disapproval according to Harris et al. (2004), which can be highly influential on our internalized beliefs of what is right and what is wrong.

Arguably, if social disapproval can influence social identities, then communication about what is right or wrong may potentially support the success of restorative justice interventions. Harris et al. (2004) reasoned that since social validation is based on the views of those we respect, communication can assist offenders to more clearly understand the wrongs they have committed (Harris, Walgrave, & Braithwaite, 2004, p. 196).

Harris et al. (2004) further argued that shame involves the “whole self” while guilt involves the “act” (p. 196). The question raised here is; can we feel bad about the wrong actions we committed without feeling bad about who we are? Guilt involves taking responsibility for the action. According to research, guilt and shame go hand in hand because without the emotion of guilt, there would be no shame. Arguably, these two emotions involve a connection between the wrong action and the self. Harris et al. (2004) reported that people

avoid the feelings of shame by responding in various ways in order to protect their social identity. The problem is that avoidance of this emotion can be detrimental to the self and relationships. Therefore, research emphasizes that these emotions must be handled correctly, or it can exacerbate the problems for the individual and can impede the restorative justice process. The significant point here is that feelings of shame and guilt need to be dealt with in a manner that restores relationships and reintegrates the individual, rather than enhancing the feelings of embarrassment and inadequacy, which is known to make matters worse (Harris, Walgrave, & Braithwaite, 2004).

The emotions of shame and guilt are inevitable for an individual after a wrong has been committed. The challenge is how to handle these feelings in a restorative manner. Reintegrative shaming theory suggests that stigmatizing an individual is the most damaging and worst way to manage the emotion of shame. Harris et al. (2004) suggest that restorative justice offers a solution to this challenge, by highlighting the significance of talking through the consequences of the offending action. According to Harris et al. (2004) vindication of the victim requires that the offender acknowledge shame. However, restorative justice practices, offer an opportunity for the offender to deal with this inevitable emotion in a constructive way. Zehr (2002) argued, that in order for victims and offenders to heal from a harmful occurrence, the hurt from the harmful action must be acknowledged. Zehr (2002) argues “acknowledging and validating the harm” is as significant to healing from an action that caused harm, for both victim and

offender as it is to one's health (p. 26). The controversy with acknowledging shame is that it has the potential to be misused in restorative justice practices, specifically with "circles", because, if not handled correctly, many fear that individuals will learn that shame should be "imposed" rather than "removed" or utilized as a "verb" rather than a "noun" (p. 26).

Zehr (2002) further argued that the emotion of shame has the potential to motivate violence and make matters worse for all involved. Zehr (2002) suggested that if Brathwaite's (1989) reintegration theory of shame is correct, then the current notion of justice in the criminal justice arena, that stigmatizes offenders and enhances guilt and shame, is perpetuating "delinquent subcultures" which is exacerbating problems for society. Such dynamics can help explain why shame is "ineffective as a deterrent" because it pushes individuals that have been rejected and judged by society together as a group, which often "strengthens the very phenomena we hope to discourage" (p. 27). Zehr (2002) argues the significance of the emotion of shame being dealt with in a manner that heals and restores the offender and the victim, which can only be accomplished through restorative justice practices. Shame and humiliation are emotions that are experienced by both victim and offender when a wrongful action occurs. According to Zehr (2002), the sense of belonging is significant to healing from the feelings of brokenness and isolation, which are often the narrative that dominates the lives of victims and offenders. Victory over these

feelings requires re-narrating the stories that create these harmful emotions after a wrongful action has been committed (Zehr, 2002).

Vindication, Retribution and Shame

In the criminal justice arena, retribution (eye for an eye) is the goal for responding to vindication and criminal behavior. Zehr (2002) argues that vindication is the motivating factor for injustice and violence. Vindication is the desired response from the victim, in order to minimize the shame that is experienced from being victimized. The problem is that this type of “reciprocity” can transfer shame back to the offender, which has the potential to repeat and intensify the cycle (p. 29).

Zehr (2002) further argues that vindication is a basic need for the victim. Revenge differs from vindication, because it is more “instinctual” than the need for vindication. When a victim seeks vindication, it is an act to remove the shame that has been transferred to them by the offender. Vindication is a way of removing the shame and humiliation by making the offender responsible for the offense that created harm. However, the author argues that if the shame is transferred back to the offender, then the cycle continues and healing for both victim and offender is less possible. The author further noted that shame and humiliation should be removed and transformed; a belief that is not valued in our current criminal justice system (Zehr, 2002).

According to Zehr (2002) the commonality that is shared in retributive and restorative theory, which are two concepts of justice, is that “a balance has been

thrown off by the wrongdoing,” which is referred to as “basic moral intuition” (p. 29). Restorative justice theory, however, addresses the needs of both victims and offenders by acknowledging the harms that were done, while encouraging the offender to take responsibility for the behavior that caused the harm and make the wrongs right. Harris et al. (2004) argued that in order for this to happen, shame and guilt must be acknowledged and resolved through “reparation” which is possible through restorative justice conferencing (p. 202). This restorative justice approach has the potential to transform narratives for both the victim and the offender. Zehr (2002) argues that crime and retribution is a symbol of “woundedness” and “alienation” and only “love” can change things and create a safer and more just society for all (p. 30).

Attachment Theory

The premise of attachment theory argues that a child’s bond with a primary caregiver determines the success or failure of future relationships. Furthermore, it involves a child’s intrinsic needs to seek comfort, reassurance, sustenance and safety in the world (Bowlby, 1969). Attachment theory involves a close, emotional bond, which develop between an infant and a caregiver. Typically, this involves the relationship between a mother and child. However, the bond also involves attachments with other caregivers and the child’s intrinsic needs to seek comfort, reassurance, sustenance and safety in the world (Bowlby, 1969). Early experiences with caregivers have the potential to negatively or positively influence one’s “overall relational abilities” in their adulthood (Hoover, 2004, p.2). Theorists,

John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, are responsible for the foundational evolution of attachment theory. There are several complex components of this theory and they involve many layers of thought. However, the premise of the theory is that a child's bond with a primary caregiver determines the success or failure of future relationships.

Furthermore, the model primarily focuses on a young child's experiences with an encouraging and supportive caregiver, and the belief that the more favorable the relationship with the caregiver, the healthier future relationships will be with others (Hoover, 2004). Gregoriadis and Grammatikopoulos (2013) noted that many studies have utilized the attachment theory perspective to conceptualize parent-child relationships and teacher-child relationships. In addition, researchers have utilized this approach in multiple studies involving early childhood education, to explain the significance of relationships with caregivers and student achievement. Moreover, researchers have utilized the teacher-child construct to explain other theoretical perspectives, such as "contextual," "relational," and "motivational" perspectives (p. 1). Studies indicate that teacher-child relationship patterns, as it relates to attachment theory are significant because it can help define the significant aspects of students' social and relational experiences in the classroom. Since this theory has been widely utilized to explain teacher-child relationships and academic success and achievement, it can potentially support current and future studies on this topic (Gregoriadis & Grammatikopoulos, 2013).

Pilot Project

McCluskey, Lloyd, Kane, Riddell, Stead & Weedon (2008) conducted a pilot project in the UK with several schools that had implemented restorative justice practices and found that restorative practices were most effective when behavior was addressed through strategies that involve healing relationships and a commitment modeled by school staff members. Furthermore, effectiveness was measured where management of the school had invested in staff training and development. This was a mixed methods study that involved eighteen schools and over two hundred pupils, and four hundred education staff. The continuum in this study included the following:

- Restorative ethos building;
- Curriculum focus on relationship/ conflict prevention;
- Restorative language and scripts;
- Restorative enquiry;
- Restorative conversations;
- Mediation, shuttle mediation and peer mediation;
- Circles- checking-in and problem-solving circles;
- Restorative meetings, informal conferences, classroom conferences and mini-conferences; and
- Formal conferences (p. 410).

The schools included in the study shared the following features:

- A strong focus on ethos and relationships in and out of classroom and a generally broad view of RP underpinning specific practices
- A strong leadership and positive modeling by head teachers and key staff
- A major contribution to the developments by class teachers and support staff
- A focus on promoting restorative language in school interactions, using posters and cards with scripts
- Playground projects involving promoting positive relationships through games and activities supported by trained problem solvers and peer mediators
- Restorative conversations and classroom conferences; and
- Social skills and cognitive reasoning programs aimed at developing skills to prevent and resolve conflict (p. 410).

The McCluskey et al. (2008) study included other initiatives such as “peer mediation training, cognitive reasoning programs, and social skills courses. However, restorative justice was highlighted as the “glue” that helped integrate them.

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- Playground projects involving promoting positive relationships through games and activities supported by trained problem solvers and peer mediators
- Restorative conversations and classroom conferences; and
- Social skills and cognitive reasoning programs aimed at developing skills to prevent and resolve conflict (p. 412).

Findings in the McCluskey et al. (2008) study indicated strong change in school culture, such as the use of restorative justice language by staff members and pupils. Furthermore, the authors of this study argued that while there were some resistant staff members, the atmosphere of the schools were “calmer” and pupils had a positive attitude about their “whole school experience”. The authors further argued that the staff seemed fair and demonstrated the ability to listen to “both sides of the story.” The study also found that implementation of restorative justice has been significantly successful in some of the schools. This study indicated a decrease in exclusions, in school discipline referrals and out of school referrals and there was “clear evidence” that students developed skills in conflict

resolution. Strong staff modeling by school management that had a strong commitment to training and was a leading indicator of implementation success (McCluskey et al., 2008, p. 410). Findings further indicated a need to address conflict and harm by restoring relationships, and schools need to develop “ethos, policies and procedures” that reduce conflict in the first place (p. 405). The following indicators of significant achievement across the schools being evaluated in this study were as follows:

- Clear evidence from research of school change
- Staff mainly positive views and understandings about RP
- Most staff and pupils familiar with key ideas if not the term
- Evidence of permeation of practice and of positive outcomes
- Evidence of improved relationships within the school
- Pupils indicated that they were listened to
- Integrated, or working toward integrated, policy framework
- Broad focus on values as well as strategies and practices
- Staff reflect on practices
- Clear impact on discipline and school climate- Significant achievement in some places
- Clear evidence of restorative practices and developments
- Enthusiasm and understanding by key school staff and in some classrooms and subjects
- Challenge to still widen across all classrooms or subjects

- Key staff and some class/subject staff familiar with key ideas and reflect on practice
- Some visible impact on discipline and school climate- Early stage but evidence of progress
- Evidence of commitment and enthusiasm by key school staff
- Some staff trained
- Some practices developed in particular settings or by particular staff, e.g. behavior support, teacher, or subject teacher in own classroom
- Plans in place for further development
- Beginning impact on discipline and school climate- other priorities dominate
- Other pressures/developments mean that RP not high priority
- Some staff wishes to promote this but lack of overall clear plans (p. 412).

McCluskey et al. (2008) further indicated that “readiness to change,” “balance of clarity” and “flexibility about identification of aims” had a significant impact on successful implementation and effectiveness. The findings outlined in this study underscored the significance that the schools that were committed to change, and recognized the need for change, were the ones that had the most success. The authors further argued that agency was a factor that influenced school readiness for change. “Agency” involves the “capacity” to make things

better. Therefore, recognizing the need for change is not enough to produce change, one must possess “agency” and feel that they have the “capacity” for change (p. 412). Finally, this study pointed to the fact that possibilities with restorative justice in schools depend on how deeply schools engage in the principles of restorative justice practices and how tensions are managed between the punitive paradigm and policy and practice for behavior management (McCluskey et al., 2008).

Implementation

According to Pavelka (2013), “strong leadership, vision and empowerment among administrators, faculty, staff, students, volunteers and the community” is required for successful restorative justice implementation. The author further argued that RP implementation can improve school culture and can provide support for many challenges that schools encounter that impede peace in schools and communities (p.17). Vaandering (2011) reasoned that although restorative justice focuses on community involvement and relationships, the primary purpose of restorative justice is to educate people, rather than solely behavioral management. The author discussed this further by highlighting five fault-lines that can support teachers and administrators who find implementation of restorative justice in schools challenging. The fault-lines include:

Fault-line #1: RJ as a new paradigm or RJ as a pragmatic, parallel approach. (The old adversarial, retributive paradigm must be abolished and replaced with the values and philosophy of the new paradigm, OR RJ

can broaden the current institutional approach with alternatives and run parallel to it).

Fault-line #2: RJ as a process or RJ as an outcome. (A specific process is required to ensure a response is restorative OR RJ is an achieved outcome that brings healing and restoration to the participants. The process for arriving at this healing is not important).

Fault-line #3: RJ as mediation or RJ as conferencing. (Participants in the RJ conference are only those directly involved in the incident. Other stakeholders are not encouraged to participate for fear of vigilantism OR stakeholders must be present to support and encourage those directly involved but also to assure that their needs are met).

Fault-line #4: RJ as coercive or RJ as voluntary. (Participants are strongly encouraged to participate if they wish to avoid punishment OR participants are invited to participate and are discouraged from doing so under duress).

Fault-line #5: RJ principles are flexible or RJ principles are not flexible.
(Must core principles be adhered to religiously OR can they be flexible?)
(p. 312)

Vaandering (2011) asserted that these fault-lines provide structure for administrators and teachers to clarify confusion as to how to successfully integrate restorative justice in the school system. The fault lines are derived from the judicial system observations, but can also be utilized in other jurisdictions

such as the educational arena. Furthermore, the author argued that the fault lines are most useful during the training process of restorative justice practices to help educators “grapple” with engaging in concept of “peacemaking” in education (p. 312).

Vaandering (2011) pointed out the fact that there is confusion and disagreement as to the emphasis of restorative justice being a process or an outcome. Additionally, there is confusion as to the significance of involving all stakeholders involved in the harmful action and proponents of restorative justice that feel it is acceptable to coerce people into participating in restorative justice, and some who feel it should only be voluntary. Moreover, there are some people who feel that restorative justice principles are flexible and others who feel that the principles should govern education. Although there is confusion as to how restorative justice should be implemented in schools, what most scholars agree with is that restorative justice practices address behaviors that cause harm. The context of relationship and community is also significant when looking at restorative justice implementation. However, the author argued that addressing harmful behavior in a manner that leads to healing is the key to understanding the purpose of restorative justice. As restorative justice enters the educational area, it is important to understand its primary purpose in schools.

According to Vaandering (2011) the primary purpose of restorative justice is not to “manage” behavior. The purpose is to “educate people” (p. 312). Scholars have argued that the term “justice” should be dropped so that the focus

would be on “relationships” (p. 313). However, the author suggested that dropping the concept of justice can result in “regrettable errors in thinking” and may be a “fundamental mistake” and argues that “philosophical reflection” on the concept of justice is necessary for achieving positive results. The author further believed that examining the concept of justice from a lens that answers, what is being restored, and how it can perpetuate “purposeful,” “effective,” and “sustainable” practice, can help clarify confusion about the concept (p. 313). Notably, it is common for schools to want to eliminate the term “justice.” However, Vaandering (2011) argued that eliminating the term justice would be equivalent to using “a compass without a needle.” However, eliminating the term justice would not change the purpose of implementing restorative justice in schools and its significance to relationships.

Vaandering (2011) further asserted that some schools refer to restorative justice as “restorative discipline,” while others refer to it as “restorative communities.” Most schools, however, understand that engagement with restorative justice involves recognizing, repairing and building relationships. The most common definition of restorative justice includes the following three principles:

- (1) Crime (and misconduct) is a fundamental violation of people and interpersonal relationships.
- (2) Violations create obligations and liabilities.
- (3) RJ seeks to heal and put right the wrongs (p. 314).

Vaandering (2011) contended that based on the historical underpinnings about schools as hierarchical institutions, a model that is widely known as dominating and based on “coercion and submission,” it is difficult to change the language that is referred to in literature as “adversarial” and “retributive,” which poses challenges for educators in understanding how to respond to misbehavior. The author further argued, the judicial understanding of restorative justice creates a struggle between what they know about restorative justice in regard to building strong relationships and the “social expectation” of being in “control.” Although the term restorative is often paired with other terms such as discipline, school, or approach, it can add to the confusion, but also open doors for other opportunities (p. 315). Therefore, the author argued that changing the term justice would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, since it is now deeply embedded in the field globally. Vaandering (2011) continues arguing that for the purpose of the field of restorative justice, people need to be reminded of what the following terms mean:

Justice is a call to recognize that all humans are worthy and to be honored simply because they are human. Injustice occurs when people are objectified; and the term restorative becomes meaningful as it specifically refers to restoring people to a state of being honored as humans. (p. 320)

The term justice, therefore, must be embraced as the consistent “reference point” that reminds us what it means to be human (p. 320). The author clarified this further by utilizing the example of a compass without a

needle, which demonstrates what restorative justice practices would be without the term justice, which is how the field of restorative justice has been functioning. Furthermore, the term restorative justice operates much like a compass needle, because it is constantly moving in different directions, but the needle/term (restorative justice) helps us keep our bearings (Vaandering, 2011).

Furthermore, defining restorative justice continues to pose a challenge universally. Without a clear definition of what restorative justice means, Vaandering (2011) argued that educators will create their own definition according to their own assumptions of what it means, so that it will reflect their own personal approach to the philosophy. The most important aspect of restorative justice is not so much in defining the term, but understanding the key purpose, which is “repairing harm and healing relationships” and justice occurs when people are accepted as human rather than as objects (p. 316).

Vaandering (2011) further argued that educators are resistant to change, because they are consistently required to engage in new initiatives. Therefore, they look for “the route of least resistance” requiring minimum change on their part (p. 315). The author argued, “For change to occur, the power relationships underlying past ineffective practices must be challenged, and harm must be recognized not as an individual behavioral incident, but rather as a breach in relationship among people and/or the system of which they are a part” (p. 316). It has been made clear in literature that the challenge with RP implementation is

the resistance and resistance seems to be a consequence of a lack of knowledge and understanding of what RP is about.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I restate the purpose of this study and describe how the study was investigated. Furthermore, I describe my case study design, include my data collection methods and describe the data analysis process. Lastly, I identify the strategies I used to ensure trustworthiness of the research, describe my role as a researcher, and end this chapter with summary.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate an innovative program known as Restorative Practices (RP), an alternative approach to discipline in schools that is gaining attention around the globe for keeping students in school and creating safer and more caring school climates. As noted in previous chapters, New Zealand is the leading country for school implementation of RP worldwide, which was initiated following reports highlighting the enormous success it was having in their Youth Justice System, especially with the Maori population (MacRae & Zehr, 2011). In consideration of my overarching research question, I was interested in investigating the implementation and impact of RP by interviewing key players in the field, such as book authors, university professors, police officers, juvenile youth managers, school counselors, school deans,

program coordinators, and one book author. The purpose of this study was to explore RP from the lens of experts in the field from various professional fields who have had numerous years of experience with this approach. Furthermore, I was interested in exploring this approach in Auckland New Zealand, because after I discovered that New Zealand is the leading country of the implementation of RP in schools worldwide, I believed that gaining knowledge from experienced professionals in this country would contribute to the purpose and credibility of my research. The intent was to shed light on and evidence based, innovative, alternative disciplinary approach, that is being utilized for the purpose of fostering safer school climates and keeping students in school where they are able to continue learning and growing. I also believe that social transformation begins in our schools, and if our schools are not teaching students the values and social skills needed to succeed in life, then our society will pay the consequences.

The initial focus of this project was to illuminate what is working in New Zealand schools, so that school leaders in America will be inspired to initiate an innovate, alternative approach to discipline, that reportedly is not only known to help foster safer school climates, but may also comprise hopeful possibilities of narrowing the school to prison pipeline gap, increase social capital, and creating a more just and safer society for all (Simson, 2013). As noted above, the experts were chosen based on their extensive experience and background with RP in their own individual professional setting. Each of the initial four participants referred me to another participant, commonly known in recruitment for research

as “snowball sampling” (Atkinson & Flint 2001, p. 1). According to Vogt (1999), snowball sampling is a “technique for finding research subjects - one subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on” (p. 1). I then compared the findings from the interviews to the literature and looked for emergent common themes among them. The question that was utilized to guide this project was; In what ways do experienced practitioners in the field of Restorative Practices in New Zealand make sense of its significance as an alternative approach to school discipline?

The researcher’s aim was to gain insight as to not only why RP is important, but also how the program became widespread in New Zealand secondary schools, and the implications it may have on research. The purpose of the program is based on a whole-school approach dynamic to relationship building and restoring community, as an alternative response to discipline, resulting from harmful behaviors and offenses that inevitably occur in schools. Literature points out that RP is a no-blame approach to discipline, and is a set of formal and informal processes designed to build relationships and a sense of community. The aim is to build social capital, by involving the entire school community in a process that seeks to understand, repair and prevent harmful behavior (Morrison, Blood & Thorsborne, 2005, p. 5). Furthermore, it is noteworthy to mention that RP is not solely for the purpose of discipline; the practices are also noted to foster high-quality teaching and learning (p. 7).

Research Design

According to Creswell (2013) qualitative studies, involve “open-ended research questions, gather multiple forms of data to answer the research questions, and make sense of the data by grouping information into codes, themes or categories, and larger dimensions” (p. 65). Furthermore, Creswell (2014) asserted that qualitative researchers collect data in a natural setting that typically involves “face-to-face interaction” and the researcher is instrumental in “collecting data through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants” (p. 185). Although a protocol may be used, the researcher is the one who gathers the information. During the process of qualitative research, the researcher remains focused on finding meaning from the data that the participants have in regard to a particular issue or problem, and does not focus on the meaning in literature, or the researcher’s meaning of the issue or problem. Lastly, the process is emergent, meaning that it is unpredictable and the initial plan can change as the research evolves (Creswell, 2014).

Case Study

According to Zailal (2007), case study research is widely known and recognized in social science studies, “especially when in-depth explanations of a social behavior are sought after” (p. 1). Furthermore, case study research “allows the exploration and understanding of complex issues” (p. 2). Researchers began using the case study method as a tool to investigate

problems, such as unemployment, illiteracy, poverty, and drug addiction. Furthermore, researchers began utilizing this method, because they were becoming concerned with “limitations” of “quantitative methods in providing holistic and in-depth explanations of the social and behavioral problems in question” (p. 3). The case study method enables researchers to go “beyond the quantitative statistical results and understand the behavioral conditions from the actor’s perspective” (p. 3). Literature further points out that the case study method is now being utilized as a tool in multiple areas of discipline, and allows the researcher to examine data more closely within a “specific context” (p. 3). According to literature, this type of method also involves a limited number of participants in a defined (usually small) geographical area to “explore and investigate contemporary real-life phenomena through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events and conditions, and their relationships” (p. 4). Furthermore, according to Merriam (1998) a case study is a “bounded system” in which “obvious,” boundaries are identified in the study, such as a single school, an individual teacher, or an innovative program.

For this particular case study, an innovative approach to school discipline is being investigated from the leading country of the implementation of the program worldwide, known in New Zealand as Restorative Practices (RP). “By concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity (the case), the researcher aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors and characteristics of the phenomenon (p. 29). Additionally, Merriam (1998) defines this type of case

study as “particularistic,” meaning that there is a particular focus on an event, situation, program, or phenomenon. The significance of the case is what is discovered about a phenomenon and what the phenomenon represents, such as the holistic description and explanation” (p. 30). The overall intent of this particular case study is to develop a better understanding of the RP program for the purpose of creating safer school environments and reducing suspensions and expulsions by including “holistic and in-depth explanations” of the phenomenon (Zailal, 2007, p. 3). Merriam (1998) noted:

Case study is appropriate when the objective of an evaluation is to develop a better understanding of the dynamics of a program. When it is important to be responsive, to convey a holistic and dynamically rich account of an educational program, case study is a tailor-made approach and is supported as the common language approach to evaluation. Using common language, as oppose to scientific and educational jargon, allows the results of a study to be communicated more easily to non-researchers. (p. 39)

Methodology

This is a qualitative- intrinsic case study research project. Reports indicate that there are numerous understandings and multiple definitions of qualitative, case study research. The definition provided by Zucker (2009) was that case study is a “systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events, which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest” (p. 2). Baxter

and Jack (2008) noted that qualitative case study methodology, when the “approach is applied correctly, becomes a valuable method to develop theory, evaluate programs, and develop interventions” (p. 544).

According to Grandy (2010) “an intrinsic case study is the study of a case, where the case itself is of primary interest in the exploration” (p. 2). The author argued that intrinsic case study research is “exploratory in nature” and noted that it involves the researchers “interest in the case itself,” rather than in “extending theory or generalizing across cases” (p. 2). Stake (1995) argued that the purpose of an intrinsic case study is to gain a “deeper understanding of the case” (p. 112). In order to understand deeper the phenomenon of RP, I chose to interview key players in the field of RP with multiple years of experience with the approach of RP in their professional field of practice, in their own work setting, and in their own country. Furthermore, literature regarding case study research highlights that it is often challenging to categorize a case study as one particular type. Nevertheless, it is possible for case studies to have more than one type. However, for this research project, the researcher will use only intrinsic case study to guide the research, recognizing that there are limitations in producing “generalizable findings” with this approach (Grady, 2010, p.2).

As noted previously, the benefits of utilizing this approach, is that it enables an opportunity to explore particularities of a specific phenomenon (Grady, 2010). Furthermore, the primary focus is “context” in seeking both “depth and breadth” in exploration (p. 2). Another purpose of utilizing this

approach is for the “researcher, participants, and the reader” to all play a role in experience reconstruction of the phenomenon. Although intrinsic case study is “exploratory in nature” the preparation of this approach involves preparation, such as who to talk to, where data should be gathered, and which events are significant to observe. The data analysis will essentially involve interpretation of meaning in order to capture the essence of the case. As Grandy (2010) reported, “The intrinsic case strives to capture the richness and complexity of the case” (p. 3). By utilizing this approach, the researcher hopes to gain valuable insight into the purpose and significance of the RP approach for schools.

This case study is exploratory in nature and focuses on uncovering the “particularities” of experts in the field of RP in New Zealand and their understanding of the usefulness of this approach (Yazan, 2015, p. 139). My intrinsic interest in investigating this approach is to better understand the purpose of RP by exploring the historical and social side of the program in the leading country of RP worldwide. The category of research for this study most aligns with is interpretive-hermeneutic, which according to Yeaman, Hlynka, Anderson, Damarin, Muffoletto, 2001, means “the art and science of interpretation” (p. 254). In this case study, I am interested in gaining insight of the usefulness of the RP approach by understanding and interpreting the subjective experiences of the participants with RP. I chose an intrinsic case study approach, because I am personally interested in understanding a particular phenomenon in a particular setting.

Furthermore, the intrinsic case study approach enables the reader to draw interpretations about the “particularities of the case” as well as enables the “transferability of the findings to other cases,” which Gandy (2010) noted as “depth” meaning that the reader can relive the case, rather than the researcher “generalizing or theorizing” the case for the reader (p. 4). In addition to the “particularistic” attribute of intrinsic case study, Yazan (2015) pointed out two other “unique” and “distinctive” attributes known in case study research as “descriptive” and “heuristic” (p. 139). While particularistic focuses on a specific situation, phenomenon, program, or event, descriptive yields a thick and rich description of a phenomenon and “heuristic focuses on the reader’s ability to understand the phenomenon being studied. Merriam (1998) argued that these attributes are what sets case study method apart from other research methods.

Lastly, the researcher is utilizing the case study approach noted by (Stake, 1998) as a “flexible” design; the notion that “the course of the study cannot be charted in advance” (Yazan, 2015, p. 141). According to Yin, Merriam, and Stake (2015), flexible design “allows researchers to make major changes even after they proceed from design to research” (p. 140). From a “Stakian” viewpoint, the case study design requires “progressive focusing,” which means that the case unfolds and transitions as it develops from “stage to stage” (p. 141).

Methods

I answered the overarching research question by interviewing experts in the field of RP. Approximately twelve experts were interviewed, including four secondary school counselors, two secondary school deans, one youth justice manager, one police sergeant, two university professors, a program coordinator, and one RP consultant. It is noteworthy to mention that the role of a school dean in New Zealand is similar, in part, to the role of a counselor in the U.S. In New Zealand, the role of a dean focuses on delivering care for a specific year level group of students. There are several deans that are assigned a specific group of students, to ensure that every student in the school receives the necessary care and attention to students' overall wellbeing and achievement. Moreover, the role of a youth justice manager in New Zealand also differs from the U.S. A youth justice manager supervises individuals who manage offenders in the youth justice system through a government service known as the Child Youth and Family Services (the main governmental social welfare provider for children). All participants included in this study were selected based on their extensive knowledge and experience with restorative practices including the utilization and/or research of restorative practices.

Research Setting

The research was conducted with observations and semi-structured interviews and several themes were explored regarding the practice of

restorative practices in the region of Auckland, New Zealand. Twelve interviews took place in counseling offices and other administrative offices, with the exception of one interview that took place via Skype, because the participant lives in Australia. However, this particular participant travels back and forth from New Zealand to Australia regularly, as she works in the Auckland region with schools to support the RP implementation process. Furthermore, this particular participant was identified as one of the pioneers in RP school implementation in New Zealand.

According to the New Zealand Practice Manual (Boyack, 2000) New Zealand is the leading country in RP in schools, dating back to the Maori who played a significant role in its development through traditional cultural customs and traditions throughout history. MacRae and Zehr (2011) pointed out that the juvenile justice system in New Zealand became so “overburdened” with young incarcerated individuals in the 1980s, that it once held one of the “highest” incarceration rates “in the world” (p. 1). According to MacRae and Zehr (2011) the Maori minority population, in particular, did not respond well to the “Western system” of punitive practices and were the most negatively impacted (p. 2). During the late 1980s, the government began listening to the cries of the communities regarding their youth and the justice system, and, hence, the Family Group Conference (FGC) emerged as a useful method in the youth justice system. By 1989, “The Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act” became the focus of the New Zealand juvenile justice system (p. 2). MacRae

and Zehr (2011) contended that New Zealand was the first country in the world to “institutionalize” a form of restorative practices. Furthermore, the FGC became the “hub” of New Zealand’s “entire juvenile justice system” (p. 2). Research indicates that after seeing the enormous success with the Maori population and youth in the New Zealand juvenile justice system, New Zealand decided to try this method in their schools. As such, New Zealand was the first to implement what is known as RP in their schools and have been experiencing similar success as in their juvenile justice system. One of the pioneers for this initial decision to try this approach in schools is one of my participants for this study.

I initially chose New Zealand to conduct this investigation because of the history and success New Zealand has had with this approach, but later discovered through my literature review that it was the leading country for the movement worldwide. I believe that the U.S. is in need of innovative alternative discipline reform policies, and New Zealand’s example offers a hopeful light for the future of our nation’s youth, who is the future of our society.

Research Sample

The four original participants for this study were pre-selected by my chair, Dr. John Winslade, who has worked in New Zealand in several secondary schools as a school counselor, as well as a university professor, and is also a native of New Zealand. The participants were given an informed consent form to sign prior to the first interview (See Appendix C). All participants were given an

opportunity to ask any questions about the interviews or the research project, prior to the interviews commencing. Consent forms included how the information was being gathered, and how it would be used for academic research and other possible publications. Voice recordings and notes taken from the interviews will be destroyed upon completion of the research project.

Research Instrumentation

The following is a list of questions that were asked during the interviews with the adult participants. The questions were broken into three categories; (1) Rationale (2) Implementation; and (3) Research. Before the questions were asked, I asked the participants for their signed informed consent form that was emailed to them prior to the interviews taking place. I then asked each participant if they had any questions for me pertaining to the interview and reminded them that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw their consent at any time. Table 1 contains the research question that guided this research project and the questions I asked each participant.

Table 1. *Sample Interview Questions Mapped to the Research Question*

Research Question	Pertinent Interview Questions
In what ways do experienced practitioners in the field of Restorative Practices in New Zealand make sense of its significance as an alternative approach to school discipline?	<p>Rationale</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Where did your passion for restorative practices begin? 2 What appeals to you about this work? 3 What changes to the field of education might a focus on restorative practices produce?

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- 4 Why do you think restorative justice implementation is important for schools?
 - 5 What makes restorative practices effective in schools?
 - 6 What has been your involvement with restorative practices?
 - 7 What components of restorative practices have you had the most experience with?
 - 8 What are the limits of restorative practices? Where might it not be useful?
 - 9 What do you see as the future of restorative practices?
 - 10 Where do the threats/opposition lie for the future of restorative practices?

Implementation

- 11 What are some of the most important aspects to know about how a school might start to form a commitment to restorative practices?
- 12 How are restorative practices supported or not supported by politicians? Central administrators?
- 13 How were policy makers convinced to support this program?
- 14 Who in a school has to be committed to restorative practices to implement them?
- 15 What does it mean to be a partially, or fully restorative school?
- 16 How are school leaders convinced to support this program?
- 17 What are the most important training issues?
- 18 What have been the implementation issues you have encountered or heard of?
- 19 What are the conditions required for restorative practices to be successful?
- 20 In your opinion, can other countries experience the same success that New Zealand has been experiencing with this approach?
- 21 In your opinion, how can other countries become more aware of the usefulness of this approach?

Research

- 22 What research has been done and needs to be done?
- 23 What have been the breakthroughs and success with this approach so far?
- 24 Has restorative justice impacted the rates of suspensions, indefinite suspensions, attendance, office referrals, bullying, and misbehavior in schools? What other benchmarks are being measured?
- 25 Which component of restorative justice is most useful for decreasing suspensions? Why?
- 26 What do teachers and counselors say about restorative practices?
- 27 What feedback do you hear, or have you heard, from parents and students about the usefulness of restorative practices?
- 28 Are there any other programs that restorative practices are connected with or depend on for successful outcomes? Or, can restorative practices be successful on their own?
- 29 What is the relationship between schools and other social institutions such as police and social welfare? What impact does this have on the effectiveness of restorative practices?
- 30 Do you think restorative justice can be successful in other countries? What advice would you give to other countries about restorative justice practices?
- 31 Do you think that restorative justice practices help narrow achievement gaps and the school-to-prison pipeline gap?
- 32 What are you going to do with the knowledge you have gained about restorative practices from this point forward?
- 33 Which area of restorative practices needs more research and attention?

Data Collection

The researcher spent time in Auckland, New Zealand, interviewing experienced practitioners in the field of restorative practices. The data collection included thirteen voice recordings of semi-structured interviews with adult participants. The practitioners' interviews focused on the personal experiences of the participants with RP, for the purpose of understanding the philosophical underpinnings, implementation process, and the significance and meaning of the restorative approach from the experienced practitioners' perspective.

The collected data consisted of semi-structured interviews via audio recording on an electronic device with the participants in the research study. The type of technology used to record the interviews was a TASCAM DR-22WL Portable Recorder. Collection began at the outset of the interview, and ended at the closing. The recorded conversations were then transferred onto the researcher's personal laptop computer with password protection and the recordings from the device were deleted. The laptop remained in the researcher's possession at all times while in New Zealand and during travel. Upon arrival in the United States, the researcher secured the laptop in a locked safe at the researcher's residence with a combination code that only the researcher had access to. The notes taken during the observations were in the researcher's possession at all times and were locked in a briefcase while in New Zealand with a combination code that only the researcher had access to.

All recorded data will be destroyed one week after the cessation of this study. The notes will be destroyed in a paper shredder, and all recorded files from computer and tape recorder, including transcribed data, will be permanently deleted by sending the recorded information to the trash. The trash files will then be emptied, which will permanently erase all recorded files. Furthermore, participants were notified by informed consent forms, which were mailed to them one month in advance. Participants were notified that the interviews would be recorded and notes would be taken, and they would be asked to give their consent before recording began (See Appendix C; Informed Consent Forms). The researcher personally transcribed the interviews onto her home computer and the files were saved with password protection.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher adhered to the confidentiality and research standards of the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics, [ACA Standards A. 2.a., B. 1.c., G.2.d., & G.4.d]. The researcher safeguarded participants' information at all times. Participants were informed that the interviews would be voice-recorded, and that their words may be quoted and included in the dissemination of the research [ACA Standard B.6.c] Recording began at the outset of the interview, and ended at the closing. The recordings of the interviews were transferred onto researcher's personal computer and immediately deleted from TASCAM DR-22WL Portable Recorder device by selecting "delete all files." The interviews were later transcribed for data analysis onto the researcher's home computer.

No files were named with participants' names. No identifying information, such as participants' names or names of schools would be used for any part of the research or dissemination. The participants being interviewed were given a number, rather than a name so that the researcher could differentiate responses in the interviews. The recordings did not leave the location where they were stored for any reason. Voice recordings will be kept no longer than thirty days after cessation of the study, at which time all materials collected for this study will be destroyed by sending the files to the trash, and then emptying the trash, which will permanently delete all recorded information. The Internal Review Board (IRB) approved this research proposal on August 30th, 2016. (See Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter)

Data Analysis

The data analysis will consist of reading and re-reading the transcribed data about participants' experiences with restorative justice practices, and the implementation process and issues arising from utilizing the restorative practices approach. The researcher will address significant recurrent topics/themes and also significant differences. Then these themes will be checked through a further reading of the data, looking for corroborating or contradictory data. Findings will be checked for the extent to which they supported or modified existing literature about the purpose of the restorative justice process.

Dissemination

Participants in this study were notified via email in the attached informed consent form, that information gathered would be used in a published report that is designed to answer the research question. Participants were also notified that the information collected in this study was designed to answer the research question for the study and utilized to complete a doctoral level study (dissertation) that will be published through Scholarworks, and may also be published in a journal article and utilized for conferences and other publications.

Validity and Trustworthiness

My qualifications to conduct this study include extensive research on the topic of Undercover Anti-Bullying Teams, an innovative RP inspired approach to combat bullying in schools. I have also written two journal articles that have been published in the *Wisdom in Education*— one on the topic of Undercover Anti-Bullying Teams (UABT) and another publication that I co-authored, highlighting the counseling experiences of several students during a study abroad trip to Auckland, New Zealand (Winslade et al., 2016). I am also a member of the Phi Beta Delta Gamma Lambda Chapter, Honor Society for International Scholars, and was awarded a prestigious scholarship award for this project during the spring quarter of 2016. Additionally, I have previously studied abroad in New Zealand, where I worked as a school counselor at an all girls' high school. My study abroad experience in New Zealand was my initial exposure to

RP in schools. It is my belief that my background as a school counselor and my current publications, have prepared me for this research endeavor.

To ensure trustworthiness of this study, researcher will provide an opportunity for the participants to review their transcriptions in order to establish further credibility. This process is called “member checking” (Morse, 1994, p 379). According to Angen (2000) the benefits of member checking include the following:

- Provides an opportunity to understand and assess what the participant intended to do through his or her action.
- Gives participants opportunity to correct errors and challenge what are perceived as wrong interpretations.
- Provides the opportunity to volunteer additional information, which may be stimulated by the playing back process.
- Gets respondent on the record with his or her reports.
- Provides an opportunity to summarize preliminary findings.
- Provides respondents the opportunity to assess adequacy of data and preliminary results as well as to confirm particular aspects of the data (p. 379).

The following additional strategies will be utilized for achieving trustworthiness of this case study: Baxter and Jack (2008) suggested a basic foundation to enhance overall quality and trustworthiness:

(a) the case study research question is clearly written, propositions (if appropriate to the case study type) are provided, and the question is substantiated; (b) case study design is appropriate for the research question; (c) purposeful sampling strategies appropriate for case study have been applied; (d) data are collected and managed systematically; and (e) the data are analyzed correctly. (p. 556)

Role of the Researcher

My interest in the Restorative Practices approach, to healing relationships in schools, began while I was studying abroad in New Zealand a few years ago. While working at a public high school in Auckland, called Epsom Girls Grammar School (EGGS) as a school counselor, I noticed something very different about the climate of this school, in comparison to the middle school I was working at in California. I discovered that one of the differences, was that the New Zealand school was utilizing a restorative approach called Conferencing for conflict resolution and problem solving. Although I was unfamiliar with this approach while in New Zealand, it was evident that this method was making a difference at EGGS. I later discovered that EGGS was working on implementation of the RP approach for approximately seven years, and that Conferencing was making a difference reducing office referrals, suspensions and expulsions. Based on my observations while working at EGGS, in addition to the knowledge I have gained about the approach, I believe that this method has possibilities of not only

reducing suspensions and expulsions, but may also narrow the gap on the school-to-prison pipeline, and provide safer learning environments for students. Furthermore, I believe that my criminal justice and counseling background provides a foundation of knowledge that will help support my research endeavors on RP toward positive change in schools.

My passion and advocacy for positive change for school environments has motivated me to learn more about the purpose and processes of RP. After I returned to my counseling position at the junior high school in California, I shared the knowledge I gained in New Zealand about the different RP approaches I had witnessed with my on-site counseling supervisor. He seemed very curious and wanted to know more about the approach. However, at the time, I did not have enough knowledge about the approach and could only share with him what I had observed while working in New Zealand. Furthermore, while leading an aggression management group at the California junior high school for at-risk students, I could not help to think about how useful RP would be for these particular students. I later discovered that the students' negative behavior in school was connected to some underlying problems at home. I heard one of the students say, "Well, if my mom and dad would just stop fighting all night, maybe I could get some homework done." The reason they were in the aggression management group was because they were receiving numerous discipline referrals, detentions, and suspensions for their behavior and were facing the possibility of expulsion. The purpose of the aggression management group was

the principals' desperate and final attempt to help the students with their behavioral issues, so that they would avoid more serious consequences, such as suspension or expulsion. I found myself frustrated while leading this group, because I knew that the RP approach I had witnessed in New Zealand could have helped these students with their issues, and would have been a much better alternative for them than the aggression management approach.

This experience ultimately led to my current passion for RP practices and gave me the burning desire to explore innovative programs and alternative solutions for schools to provide safer learning environments for students and reduce suspensions and expulsions. Furthermore, I want to do something that provides hope for our future generations and our society. I firmly believe that RP has the potential to help foster safer and happier school climates, and will help students remain in school and continue learning. Lastly, our society will greatly benefit if students succeeded in school and learned valuable life lessons, such as healthy alternatives to dealing with conflict and how to nurture and strengthen interpersonal relationships.

Summary

Investigating the purpose of restorative practices by interviewing key players in the field of RP in New Zealand, may offer invaluable insight that may potentially enhance international appreciation and learning around the globe about an innovative program for schools that is notably making a difference in

fostering safer school climates and reducing suspensions and expulsions. The researcher gained invaluable knowledge that provided a snapshot of the usefulness of the RP program with the intent to inform policy and practices not only in the United States, but in other countries as well. New Zealand is the leading country in the development of RP worldwide, and has been experiencing enormous success with this approach in their juvenile justice system and their schools. Therefore, this international perspective may potentially influence school leaders to consider an innovative approach to transforming school climates for a happier and safer schooling experience for students. The philosophy of RP maintains that if students feel safe and are happier in school, they will achieve more and have healthier relationships with others. Furthermore, if students learn valuable interpersonal skills and conflict management skills, they will not only be more successful in school, they may also have more fulfilling and productive lives.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

In this chapter, I will present the data collected for this study. The data collected here investigates the perceptions of the usefulness and significance of restorative justice practices from the lens of twelve experts in the field with multiple years of experience with RP in New Zealand. As I read and re-read the collected data from the participants, I discovered a reoccurrence of certain themes among their responses. The themes identified will be presented here.

Participants' Responses to Experience with Restorative Practices

The twelve participants responded to several questions regarding their experiences with restorative practices. They speak to the participants' motivations for working in this area. The most important being the relationship component and interpersonal learning that occurs during the RP process. One of the most critical aspects of RP is the healing of harm and strengthening connections with others by maintaining respect throughout the process.

The participants were asked what appealed to them most about this work. One noted that what appealed to him most about RP is that it is a school-wide initiative that involves everyone, including the students. The entire school community learns how to build, maintain, and repair relationships, impacting classroom culture, which then transcends to the school community impacting school culture and climate. The transformation that happens at the school site

is then extended out to families and to the wider community, fostering a vision of social transformation. The data presented here will outline how RP makes this possible, as well as addresses several barriers that may get in the way of successful implementation and outcomes.

Relationships and Interpersonal Learning

What Makes Restorative Practices Possible

The most significant factors that interest individuals about the RP process and practice is that it attends to harm and heals relationships, while maintaining respect for all individuals involved. Furthermore, it creates opportunities for social and interpersonal learning in schools.

The idea that it is possible to do social life... essentially both individual and social life, in ways that kind of grows people into their best selves. It seems to me that no matter how we go about life, we end up bumping up against people in ways that causes harm, and if we don't have practices of reconciliation or restoration, we end up moving apart from each other...

So the thing that really interests me about restorative justice practices is the community work... The idea that we need structures to attend to harm, so that we can carry on being in relationships with each other well...

(Participant 1).

Participant one suggested here that relational harm produces a breakdown in social structures in educational organizations. RP attends to the

harm in a way that heals relationships and helps restore personal agency for individuals. It also diminishes the power of authority structures that cause social divides.

Long-term Impact of Punitive Responses

Punitive responses on the other hand can have lasting effects that carry on into adulthood. RP is known to decrease the likelihood of offending in school, which is claimed to position students on the pipeline to prison.

I would inform people about the long lasting effect that it could have... and actually having people understand the effects of their actions... and the harm that has been caused. It just doesn't seem that the punitive approach changes much of that behavior (Participant 10).

Punitive practices do not seem to change behavior that excludes students from their learning environment. It appears that punitive responses can also exacerbate problems and have a lifelong negative impact on students.

Repairing Harm and Restoring Relationships

Two participants claimed moreover that RP is a respectful way to repair harm and restore relationships that have been damaged.

As a teenager I realized how many mistakes I made, and how important it is to put things right when you do things wrong... and how to repair the harm that has been done by our actions. And so I see restorative practices as the most respectful way, and the most long-lasting way of repairing the harm... And we're not perfect. So we do things that are

hurtful and wrong, and so I think to me, restorative practices was a way of restoring the relationships ... damaged by the harm that was done through the actions that had been taken... And in my case, I just wanted to put things right (Participant 2).

I like that restorative practices upholds and maintains respect for all parties. That was the focus I was most drawn to – the focus is not, “Who’s to blame?” but on responsibility and on repair, restoring harm and restoring dignity. These practices invite people into taking up responsibility, to look at or take up a reflexive position around what one is doing and how that is for other people. It can open up the ability to see other people's needs and experiences. I like that it's not confrontational and doesn't get tied up with accusation and blame... common pitfalls that can result in resistance or denial or defensiveness. Instead, restorative practices invite people into more of a shared exploration and puts the focus on how we can go forward and to make the world respectful and safe place for everybody. (Participant 3).

Story of Two Boys

One participant shared a story about two boys who had an incident with each other and how they went about healing the harm they caused for the classroom.

An example of that is... there were these two boys that stood in front of a class and apologized to the rest of the class for their actions that disrupted

the learning of other people. Their actions, an act of violence, gave a really bad message about what the school is about to other kids that were there, and it was a sign of great bravery to stand in front of a class and apologize. And I bet after that experience, those boys will never do that again... They were involved in an act of violence that was witnessed by others and it affected other people in the class and disturbed their learning. So in order for the relationships in the class to be repaired, they had to address those things... And they did their part by a public apology... When I asked them how are you going to put things right for the rest of the class and the people that have been most affected by your actions, and so I suggested to them that we could apologize to the class... (Participant 2).

This story shows how RP can work in a classroom environment and how powerful an apology can be for everyone. The respondent stressed that there are possibilities for new relationships to form after an apology has been made.

Another participant added that while respect is highly valued, restorative practices is also about bringing community together without blaming or shaming individuals, which helps foster peaceful and safer learning climates.

Furthermore, RP enables attending to the needs of others that does not focus on blame, enabling people to move forward in a constructive way. This process is beneficial for all involved.

A Vision of Justice

Aside from citing instances of repairing relational harm, participants also outlined a vision of justice that restorative practice was about for them. Again the notion of respect emerged and the idea that the focus is on the problem and the behavior, not the person. Restorative practices seem to structure relational spaces in a way that allows for silenced voices to be heard.

I think what appeals to me most, is that the victims are heard...their hurt is heard... and the effect that it has on everybody else and not just the victim. It includes the people around the victim as well. People have their say. I think it's very fair in a sense that the offender actually hears this. But also has a right to have their say and to be respected... while it is still wrong, whatever it is that they've done, but they still are treated with respect and it's around the behavior that is unacceptable, not the person (Participant 6).

Another participant reported that RP helps people become their best selves, and emphasized that well-being greatly depends on the quality of relationships with others.

While it is incredibly confronting for the people who are in these encounters... we do our best when our relationships with others are sound and healthy... and we are social animals, so our well-being depends on the quality of our relationships... that I can, with process, not only train people to do this, but also to do it myself. So it's helping people

metabolize bad feelings they have about themselves and about others, because of something that has happened (Participant 12).

Participants argued that RP is hard work and time-consuming but that the time spent is worth it, because people learn from their mistakes and can, therefore, make better choices in future.

Promoting Equity and Fairness

One speaker said that RP emphasizes equity and fairness by collectively building community and including all stakeholders in decision-making processes. Included was an emphasis on collectivist perspectives, in contrast to individualistic perspectives, that focus on relational social capital that is gained with this approach.

One of the things about restorative practices is that it's quite a democratic, or level playing field response, to restoring relationships or attending to harm. So I think one of the main things that restorative practices offer schools, in particular, is a different way to think about and respond to things that produces a greater sense of community, rather than a one up one down authority structure. It's a more democratic authority... (Participant 1).

It is noteworthy that the speaker here suggested that stories of relationships should be written together, rather than alone. The emphasis is on how “we” work together as a community, and how “we” can write the story together that will move us forward. The participant also outlined a social vision of

democracy, which is not about electoral politics but about students learning to be good citizens. Another participant spoke about how RP provides a way to restore relationships and to continue learning.

When the relationship is shattered or broken by a person's actions, rather than isolate the person who has done the harm from the school community, restorative justice provides a way for them to restore the relationships with the people of the school community, so that they can continue their learning. Whereas, ... if they are punished and isolated, they lose the opportunity to do what is important to them, which is learn and study and be close to people. But if you isolate people and punish people, I think that will result in resentment, and people could develop hatred from the very people that make up their society... We are social beings... we need to have good, positive, and peaceful relationships with others in order to fully realize what we can offer and who we can be (Participant 2).

Again, the speaker placed value on relationships and warned that, if schools deprive students through punishment and isolation, that there are consequences, not only for the climate and culture of classrooms and schools, but also for society. The words “hatred” and “resentment” are strong words indicating negative outcomes. The emphasis on relationships is again at the forefront of creating a healthy learning environment for students where they can

feel happy and safe. The next speaker also suggested the significance of relationship as the “glue” that holds everything together.

For restorative practice to be as successful as possible, it is the glue... you know the relationship piece... it's the glue that holds everything together in schools... everything (Participant 12).

One participant reported that RP moves away from the punitive model of seeing harm as acts against school rules, and focuses on harm that causes a breakdown of relationships. The participant added that RP is hard work, but the results are stronger connections, bonds, and community.

Restorative practices moves away from some of those punitive practices and moves away from seeing harm in this kind of depersonalized way... that leaves victims or people that have been harmed out of the process. So people who have been harmed... who have no voice or agency can get further harmed in disciplinary practices that are modeled from the criminal justice system. Their needs are not taken care of... neither are the needs of the person who has done the wrong or the harm. So there is this void and disconnection, and a growing [sense] of alienation and shame and just the massive emotional disconnections between people. I think restorative brings people back into a sense of community... You know, this is hard work but we are a community and we're about reforming connections and bonds... that have already been broken. So it is

basically our ways of working with broken laws... it is the idea that harm is caused in a relationship (Participant 9).

The speaker argued here that punitive practices exert a destructive effect on relationships and fail to address needs. By contrast, restorative practices create a different context for relationships in the school and encourage people to think about the needs of both the victim and the offender.

Two other participants also emphasized that restorative practices lead to hard work and are time-consuming. However, they also expressed that more learning occurs through the RP process, as students understand the impact of their actions, which is not something that the punitive response offers.

I think it's got a lot of learning for the students in it, but it's hard work. It's hard work for us, because it obviously takes a bit more time... but I do think there is more learning for the students and understanding what the impact of their actions has been (Participant 11).

The speaker's response indicates that there is an issue with the time that RP takes, which implies that there may be strong discourses around the issue of time in schools.

It was made clear by the participants that relationships are a significant component to RP and critical for one's happiness, health, and wellbeing. Participants emphasized however, that the most significant relationship for academic success and learning is the teacher-student relationship.

Teacher- Student Relationships

As noted above, the primary goal of RP is to improve the quality of relationships and this part of the findings shifts focus on how such relationships might be thought about in terms of power. Participants argued that RP offers an opportunity to strengthen bonds with others by working collaboratively on problem solving, rather than having authority structures dictate. Furthermore, respondents stated that RP shifts the power imbalance in the classroom to a more shared learning experience for both teacher and student. Moreover, shifting power structures in the classroom may be problematic for some teachers who are resistant to relinquishing power to students.

One of the things about restorative practices is that it's quite a democratic, or level playing field response, to restoring relationships or attending to harm ... rather than a one up one down authority structure. It's a more democratic authority... If you look at the word "author" in authority, it's kind of like, we write the story of who we are together, rather than kind of a one down authoritative structure that says, "This is who you are, and I will tell you who you are" (Participant 1).

It is noteworthy that the speaker here suggested that stories of relationships should be written together, rather than by only one individual. The emphasis is on how "we" work together as a community, and how "we" can write the story together that will move us forward. The use of the word "we," rather than "I" indicates that this approach requires collaborative action.

Voice and Agency

One participant expressed the notion of “voice” and “agency” as significant factors for empowering students and strengthening teacher-student relationships. The emphasis here was on student engagement, and inclusion as foundational for successful school climates and cultures. The speaker emphasized that “pathologizing” and isolating individuals only exacerbates problems. Teacher-student relationships appear to be a vital component of overall student success. The speaker further emphasized that adults need to understand that students need more guidance and support and less punishment to help them navigate through the struggles of growing up. Students, especially in secondary schools, are expected to behave like adults, when they do not yet possess such skills.

I think that some of that emphasis on classroom order and classroom relationships is very much focused on... these are the rules of the classroom and the teacher enforces the rules... So ... restorative enables young people to have a sense of agency or a voice in their own relationships with teachers... right from small breakdowns between peers and friends to breakdowns between teachers and students ... and it sort of enables people to grow and learn, so rather than it just being, “You’ve done the wrong thing,” and pathologizing, it's growing from that sense of alienation and disconnection from others and being welcomed back or reintegrated... That shame sort of pulls people from that sense of connection and restorative practices helps young people feel more

engaged and able to be part of the community and that influences learning... so I think if restorative is more enmeshed in education, there will be better outcomes, because people will feel safer or more understood or more heard (Participant 9).

The speaker used the word “hopeless” to describe how students feel when they are oppressed by punitive responses that address rule breaking and misbehavior. Student voice seems to be a significant factor in coping with problems that inevitably arise. “Young people are learning and they're making mistakes and we sort of cut them off at the knees as soon as they get to high school and we say to them that they need to be all grown up now.” The notion that “young people will inevitably make mistakes” emphasized that acting out is just part of growing up and students should not be punished for something that they have little control over.

When the relationship is shattered or broken by a person's actions, rather than isolate the person who has done the harm from the school community, restorative justice provides a way for them to restore the relationships with the people of the school community, so that they can continue their learning. Whereas, I think that if they are punished and isolated, they lose the opportunity to do what is important to them, which is learn and study and be close to people. But if you isolate people and punish people, I think that will result in resentment, and people could develop hatred from the very people that make up their society. And

restorative justice is a way of repairing the harm and reintegrating the person back into the community that they need to be in. We are social beings... We're part of a world that we need to have good, positive, and peaceful relationships with others in order to fully realize what we can offer and who we can be (Participant 2).

The speaker here warns that depriving students of values through punishment and isolation produces consequences, not only for the climate and culture of classrooms and schools, but also for society. The words "hatred" and "resentment" indicates some of the negative outcomes from punitive responses. One respondent commented that power imbalance in the classroom is oppressive and is not conducive to strengthening teacher-student relationships. Enhancing equitable practices in the classroom is necessary for optimal learning to occur and RP can help create more equal contributions to knowledge and learning.

Education is still quite heavily based on the idea of the teacher holds the expertise and knowledge is kind of one directional... Restorative practices are founded on the knowledge and the ideas and contributions everybody has as equally valid, as equally important, and as equally necessary... It might look like a group of learners would bring what they know, what their questions are, what their curiosity is... They know about how they learn. Education would be more of a collaborative, co-creative, and shared kind

of experience, rather than directed by only one person (the teacher) and taken up by everyone else (the learners) (Participant 3).

Shifting Power in the Classroom

Respondents stated that RP shifts the power imbalance in the classroom to a more shared learning experience for both teacher and student. Moreover, shifting power structures in the classroom may be problematic for some teachers who are resistant to relinquishing power to students. The same respondent went on to say that relationships between teachers and students have always been important in education. However, they are recently becoming increasingly significant in terms of enhancing the learning experience.

Another possibility ... is the increasing realization of the value of teacher-student relationships. Relationships have always been important, but the relationships between the teacher and the student are critical. Without this relationship, without respect and regard, you really have nothing (Participant 3).

This participant expressed the impact of the teacher student relationship on learning. The claim is that if such a relationship is not positive, then learning cannot happen. RP offers an opportunity to strengthen teacher-student relationships so that quality learning can occur. Moreover, power imbalances in the classroom impede learning for students. RP offers a solution to address these concerns as the primary focus is on strengthening relationships.

The next speaker emphasized that when there is a break in teacher-student relationships, a student's mind can become consumed with a problem, which contributes to bigger problems. RP offers a solution. Another participant expressed that teachers are challenged by any change that requires them think differently about authority and discipline.

One of the ways is that RP is actually teaching teachers to speak differently with students and to enter into a different kind of relationship with them. So one way of thinking about that is... teachers need to wear their power differently or to use their power differently, so if you think about... a tower hierarchical aspect of education with that the sort of untangling or dismantling of teachers' privileged position (Participant 5).

Again the emphasis was on the teacher-student relationships and learning, and the issue of power in the classroom. When the teacher-student relationship is struggling, the student has a difficult time concentrating, which can create bigger problems for the student, the teacher, and the classroom.

RP allows an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the teacher and the student, which makes the classroom environment more comfortable for the student. I think that it's because of the stronger relationship that they have with the teacher and a feeling that there is more understanding from the teacher of them, their situation, and their needs, rather than like in a traditional educational setting, where teachers are the authority figure and are totally in control (Participant 11).

The next speaker also emphasized the importance of teachers understanding the impact of the teacher-student relationship as it pertains to learning, and added that relationships between students and relationships with teachers and families are equally critical for “successful educational outcomes” and “central to a decent education.” Furthermore, there was an emphasis on making sure that students understand that there is a certain way they are expected to behave at school that may not be conducive to their home environment. However, the expectations must be clearly delineated so that the student does not feel like authority figures at school are passing judgment on their home life.

Well, it will get people out of the time warp of thinking punishment is the only way to deal with infractions. And also to understand... the relationship between kids, and between kids and their teachers, and between teachers and families is absolutely central to a decent education. The quality of the relationships are important for successful educational outcomes... and when you punish people like you impose strategies or sanctions that are just simply designed to make kids suffer for the sake of it, then what that does is push people apart. It doesn't bring them together at all. So, you have to come together and talk things through ... so this approach could help bring about world peace ... We cannot say to kids or their family, you're wrong about that or how you do things at home. What we have to say is that when you are at our school, this is how we do

things. So that when they come in the gate or the building, they just switch into school code (Participant 12).

This speaker emphasized here the value of code-switching as a significant aspect of RP, which stresses the values of respect, connections, learning, and ways to solve problems. It was also made clear by this speaker that RP offers opportunities to teach students how to respond appropriately to inevitable problems that arise in school, while being careful not to pass judgment on the way problems are dealt with at home.

Breaking through Learning Barriers

Another participant emphasized that New Zealand has long focused on factors such as “being present, motivated and engaged.” However, the speaker underscored that achievement has always been an issue. It appears that RP offers New Zealand schools an opportunity to break through some of the barriers of learning.

I think that restorative practices as a way to truly support students to be present motivated and engaged, because they feel adults are interested in them, believe in them and adults are prepared to take account of their reflection on their own learning and perhaps even modify learning to meet their needs ... that is extremely difficult particularly at secondary level where you have that real... the barrier getting through the curriculum... RP is able to have students in the space where they believe that they are important and acknowledged and their views are valued, and they want to

be at school... then immediately you've got conditions for learning improved. Then they are inside the school gate and they want to participate in the learning, because they are not passive, they are active learners... then opportunities for learning improved even more. They are then motivated to be learners beyond what's presented in a classroom... then again that raises the opportunities for learning, so I think that restorative practices can contribute on all those levels (Participant 4).

A Vision for Learning

Another participant offers a vision of communication skills developed with RP, which will not only help improve their relationships with their teachers, but will potentially help them with other relationships that can be carried into adulthood.

Well, we are an educational institution. Young people need to learn skills that will carry them through to adulthood, and the communication skills that go with that are hugely important. The ability to problem-solve and to also solve conflict in a positive way is really important for young people. But also it is around the relationships with their teachers, because if a young person is trying to learn, and they're in an environment where they really respect their teacher then it's reciprocated... then they're going to learn a lot more, because they'll be more interested and they'll care about the person that is in front of them and what is going on in the classroom... so they'll take time to care about their learning as well (Participant 6).

When a student respects the teacher, the teacher will respect the student, and students will care more about what the teacher is attempting to teach them.

It's about the relationship with the teacher... it's about feeling heard and understood and having a greater level of understanding of their students when they've been involved in these things... that the relationships in the classroom are good... that there's more respect and care in the classroom (Participant 4).

The next speaker emphasized that RP teaches students how to have healthy and strong relationships with others, which offers them opportunities that can help them later on in life. Such lessons learned in school can help develop valuable life skills to help students become valuable citizens, as it not only teaches them how to have conversations with others in a restorative way, but it also helps them learn how to handle inevitable conflict.

Again I think it's a more productive learning... there's more opportunities for learning for students... So some of the aspects of learning is obviously related to educational, but it is also about learning life skills and... I think that that is going to help students become better citizens through having been dealt with in a sort of more restorative way, because of the learning that takes place and the conversations that you have whether they are low level with the classroom teacher or at a higher level, if there was like a restorative meeting where the focus is an action that has been wrong (Participant 11).

Another participant emphasized how the teacher-student relationship can be strengthened, by showing teachers how to speak differently to their students, which shifts the power dynamic of the classroom. The speaker also reported that hierarchical power structures in educational organizations are known to influence resistance, as teachers find it difficult to “relinquish power.”

So... I think that the profession of being a teacher is actually challenged by hierarchical aspects of education. There's a question around knowledge. So I think restorative practice is a process for showing people how to maintain their own self-respect, while they're actually relinquishing a shifting to a different position as a teacher. So it also repositions education significantly and is potentially a story about how education is different and how knowledge is different or perceived differently, but... I think it's a step too far for most people doing this kind of work... For most people it's about discipline rather than the relationship, but I think once you get past the notion of the authority of the teacher and knowledge, you actually are moving to a more democratic sort of interaction with students as a teacher which problematizes the identity of teacher, in which actually potentially democratizes knowledge... to me it's a huge revolution were engaged in. So, it's not just about discipline and behaving... it's a way of potentially changing the future in education (Participant 5).

Such a response deepens understanding of what RP might be about. It suggests that there is much more involved than most people assume. The

argument is that there is a substantial discursive shift involved. It seems that teachers, in particular, adhere to the discourse that knowledge is grounded on the notion that the teacher holds all the power and knowledge and the student is the passive recipient. This speaker suggested that teacher identity is at stake in this shift. “Democratizing” knowledge is a huge revolution and can potentially change the future in education.

Classroom Culture and Climate

Creating a Healthy Classroom Environment

A further focus of what participants said was on the effects of RP on more than just the students and teachers most immediately involved. For these folk there was an important impact on overall classroom climate or culture. For example, Participant 2 reported that after teachers experience the power of RP in a classroom and the difference it can make on classroom climate, they would realize that the students are the ones making the difference, as they are ultimately the driving force of a healthy classroom climate.

A further focus of what participants said was on the effects of RP on more than just the students and teachers most immediately involved. For them there was an important impact on overall classroom climate or culture. For example, Participant 2 reported that after teachers experience the power of RP in a classroom and the difference it can make on classroom climate, they would

realize that the students are the ones making the difference, as they are ultimately the driving force of a healthy classroom climate.

Well, I think it has to come from a person who has used restorative practices in a classroom, or a small setting, and have seen the power of that approach. They will tell somebody else and they'll try it, or they'll have a circle classroom for the first time, and they'll just see how profound the understandings have come from the decentralization of the expectations of the teacher... and so you're putting the responsibility into the hands of the students to decide what kind of classroom they want to have. And when a few people do that, it becomes a sense of passion and it's the same thing as when you look at something and see that this really is amazing and I can't deny it... I can't possibly go back to how I worked before. Because I've seen it and experienced something that I've never seen before and I think that's how restorative justice really takes a hold. It reflects values of what they haven't even been aware of (Participant 2).

The positive impact of RP in the classroom speaks for itself, and after people witness the transformation that takes place, there is no denying that RP works. Furthermore, creating a positive learning environment in the classroom is ultimately the students' responsibility, as the participant noted that the student decides what kind of classroom they want to have.

Positive Relationships and Learning

The emphasis on positive relationships and learning was highlighted by the next speaker, which was noted as significant for overall student success. RP not only helps students succeed in school, but it also enables them to learn valuable life skills that will help them thrive.

Well certainly positive relationships... absolutely. And it separates the behavior from the person. It also brings about a model of communication, positive communication between people... and young people need to be taught those skills. One cannot just assume that people grow up with the appropriate communication skills and many young people do, however, for those that don't, they need to be taught and that form of communication needs to be modeled everywhere they go. And given that they are in school for a very long time, it is very appropriate that people will pick up on those skills and their relationships will be really positive (Participant 6).

The speaker here suggested that students spend a significant amount of time in school and, therefore, have an opportunity to learn skills that will help them become productive citizens. RP appears to offer students valuable life skills, such as interpersonal skills and conflict management skills, which are vital for growing social capital and transforming society.

The next speaker reported that successes in a classroom are invisible, implying that the impact of RP is not something that can easily be seen.

Successful implementation, however, leads to less disruption in class and improved learning and teaching.

The successes are invisible. If you've got a teacher and a student who are in conflict with each other, for example, and you need restorative practices to somehow resolve the conflict, it's not that you will see anything spectacular... The child goes on to continue to doing well in class, and the teacher goes on to teach well. It helps resolve the conflict that disrupts the class, but in many ways it's invisible... not particularly invisible, just difficult to measure other than anecdotally. Everything just seems better (Participant 1).

The outcomes of using the RP approach in the classroom, which include fewer disruptions and improved learning and teaching, are difficult to measure. However, teachers and students will notice that the classroom climate is better.

Managing Disruptive Behaviors in the Classroom

Another participant spoke about using RP principles when a student might be sent to the office, where they will likely receive a suspension. With the RP approach, rather than sending them out of class, the teacher can take the student outside of the classroom and have a conversation with them, and then bring them back into the classroom.

Learning occurs when students are in the class, not spending days out on suspension... this doesn't teach them anything. If they are sent out of

class the teacher should go out and have that conversation and bring the student back in class again (Participant 6).

Participants also reported that as classroom climates improve, school culture and climate improves, as it transcends from the micro-culture of the classroom to the larger culture of the school. It is, therefore, the topic to which we turn next.

School Culture and Climate

Vision

Participants responded to several questions regarding the impact of RP for schools. One of the positive outcomes is that it is empowering for students.

It empowers people and empowers youth to be proactive about the environment and the school community (Participant 1).

Another respondent reported that RP helps create a community of care, which results in improved learning outcomes.

I think it is a significant contribution to those outcomes or those benefits, because it creates a community of care, it creates a relationship of responsibility that is shared with everybody... but if one person is struggling, we are all suffering. We all hold part of the key (Participant 3).

The next participant said that keeping kids in school proves beneficial on many levels. If students remain in school, they are less likely to become involved in criminal activity, which can position them on the school-to-prison pipeline.

The more kids that can remain in school, the least opportunity they will have to commit crimes (Participant 8).

The next speaker reported that there had been a significant decline in discipline and that fights at school are now rare. The speaker also said that a well-being survey can measure the emotional well-being of a school and added that longitudinal studies are necessary to measure ongoing success with the RP approach. The results from the studies can help decision-makers plan for the future and make necessary modifications.

We hardly have any discipline anymore. The fights are very rare in our school now. You might see in an all girl school, that fights are rare as well. But, the emotional climate is something that is measured by the well-being survey. You can look at that as a way of getting a longitudinal study, and that's where the research question comes in as well. Each school needs to have its own research done continually about how it's doing according to what they would like it to be. And that ongoing research has to be used. The data that comes from that needs to be used by the school authorities to make decisions, and planning decisions (Participant 2).

One of the positive outcomes of the RP approach is that it can eliminate detentions for minor rule-breaking behaviors such as being late for school, or truancy. The use of detention practices exclude students from their learning environment, which has negative implications for the students' academic growth.

We've gotten rid of detentions. When I first became a dean, I've had a few late students who automatically got a detention and with some deans, there was no discussion around that... it was just... you've been late three times, so now you have to sit in a room for a half an hour or an hour... and the same with truancy... whereas, we don't have that now. We got rid of it (Participant 10).

The next participant stressed that a restorative ethos in a school culture helps people come forward when there is a problem. The assumption made here is that RP provides an open environment for people to feel comfortable talking about their issues, which is empowering for students and can help narrow achievement and learning gaps.

People aren't going to come forward if there is a punitive environment... they will if there is a restorative ethos... so that would help narrow the learning and achievement gaps. It empowers people and empowers youth to be proactive about the environment and the school community. In terms of prison and so on... the earlier the interventions and the earlier the alternatives are introduced to a young person's life, the better the outcomes are... so if primary schools were to be involved in restorative processes and a young person was to learn how to communicate what they are struggling with, or their frustrations, or whatever, in ways that didn't result in violence or harm, then that could alleviate a lot of suffering in communities (Participant 3).

The significant point made here was that RP is a proactive approach that can enable more communication, which enables students to talk about their problems and struggles in constructive ways, rather than acting out their frustrations in behaviors that can get them thrown out of class or school. The speaker emphasized that students talking about their feelings can alleviate a lot of suffering.

The next speaker noted that RP enables learning that can help make a difference if the learning takes place early on in life. It appears that when RP is taught in the early stages of life, it can help decrease behaviors that position them on the pipeline-to-prison.

I think that if you start early enough for some students and they actually understand what their behavior is doing to other people, hopefully that learning will make a difference. That offending may stop or lessen...which probably would stop the pipeline-to-prison (Participant 10).

Participant 8 noted that RP helps reduce the possibility of incidences that get students excluded from their learning environment.

It helps the kids grow and understand and will hopefully reduce any further incidences of those sort of behaviors (Participant 8).

Participant 3 reported that the value of RP does not solely lie in the outcomes, but the value is in the learning process that takes place.

The value of it is the process. It's not just about the so-called outcome... it's not just that we "live happily ever after"... that we "kissed and made

up.” The value is in the process to get to that place, and what we’ve all learned, and how we’ve understood each other at a human level. That is sometimes not seen as valued or seen as being part of what we get from this. That may not even been seen at all (it’s hard to evidence in ways that satisfy those needing numbers or “empirical research”)... So the question is “how do we raise the status” of all that interpersonal stuff, so that it becomes equally or more valued and recognized? (Participant 3).

Participant 3 stressed that it is difficult to measure the interpersonal growth that occurs during an RP process. The learning that occurs during the process is the value of RP. However, proving that interpersonal growth occurs with RP is a challenging endeavor for researchers.

Learning Life Skills

The emphasis here was on the significance of teaching students valuable skills that are central to what education is about, rather than an added extra on the side. RP is constructed in this vision as strengthening and nurturing relationships, which are the most critical components for changing school culture, and which the punitive model does not seem to offer.

The next speaker emphasized that schools are a part of the larger community and added that a “rupture” in the school community transcends into the larger community. Therefore, removing a student from school can have detrimental outcomes for a school community. The cost is just too great.

Well, I think of schools as a community and as a rupture in our community or a ripple that needs to be healed... and schools as a community have an opportunity to work really hard to resolve and maintain... Kids deserve an education... And there has to be a fairly high threshold before you would remove that young person from school... I mean... the implications are just so huge... If you exclude a kid from education, you have kind of written a check for half a million dollars right there... It is just too costly (Participant 7).

Improving School Communities

Restorative practices are known to help strengthen relationships, improve classroom cultures and build social capital. This may potentially be a step toward creating positive school cultures, where students feel safe and cared for. The community component of RP has been greatly emphasized by respondents as vital to successful outcomes with RP and school culture.

One speaker reported that what he appreciates most about this work is that it is a school-wide initiative, involving the entire school community.

There are several things that appeal to me about the work that we do. I think first and foremost is that we approach it in the way that the ministry's restorative practice model approaches the work, as a school-wide initiative. So that it's not something that is the responsibility only of teachers or only of leaders, but it is the responsibility of a whole school community, including the students... and then extending back out to their

families in the community to reflect on the way they build and maintain and repair relationships. And I think that appeals to me, because I've always held a belief that learning is community-based... learning doesn't happen for a student in isolation. All of the factors around the students have to be working together to enable a successful learning experience... (Participant 4).

The speaker seems to be reaching for a development in overall school culture, rather than just in individual learning. The suggestion is that learning stops when students are isolated and that learning is a product of collective culture that involves more than individuals and their personal behavior. Learning theory, by contrast, often focuses on the individual learner. The speaker further suggested that isolating a student impedes the learning process and is, therefore, counterproductive.

Another participant also said that constructing school culture involves the entire school community.

There are lots of layers that are important... I think that restorative practices ... involve and invite everybody into participating and taking responsibility for safe, peaceful, harmonious respect for positive learning environments and relationships. We are all participants here... we are all contributors. We are either part of the solution or by default we are part of the problem. There are no bystanders. We're all involved in contributing to the learning environment (Participant 4).

The speaker articulated that improving school culture requires everyone at the school site to be active participants and contributors in the change process. The emphasis here was that positive school culture involves collective action of all stakeholders.

The next speaker emphasized that improving whole school culture requires training for all stakeholders. Training enables people to understand how to deal with students and informs practice by making it a common practice for dealing with situations that arise in schools.

If you want a whole school approach, you don't just train half a dozen people. In a school you need everyone trained to some degree or another (Participant 12).

Again the emphasis was made on whole staff training as significant for successful implementation of RP.

I think they are more effective when more people are trained and have a common understanding of how we deal with students. It's always a bit tricky when everyone runs at different stages and when we're directing people around in different ways, so... They're definitely more effective when people know more about it and are more on board with implementing it with common processes and frameworks for dealing with situations (Participant 10).

Again the significance of whole staff training was highlighted once again as paramount to successful implementation. Participant 1 reported that it is

important for everyone to be on the same page, which becomes the “social character” of the school.

The main way to train people in restorative practices is through participation I think. I think you do need a significant group of people who are skilled and are championed in this idea, but most people that come to restorative practices are participants. I think that it is important to train the whole staff of a school, so that everybody is kind of on the same page. So it involves the social character of the school, when you train the whole staff (Participant 1).

Collaboration is Key

Another participant reported that RP helps strengthen school community and helps schools move away from the punitive model of seeing harm as acts against school rules, and focuses on harm that causes a breakdown of relationships. The participant added that RP is hard work, but the results are stronger connections, bonds, and school community.

What really appeals to me is that... Restorative practices moves away from some of those punitive practices and moves away from seeing harm in this kind of depersonalized way that leaves victims or people that have been harmed out of the process. So people who have been harmed... who have no voice or agency can get further harmed in disciplinary practices that are modeled from the criminal justice system. Their needs are not taken care of... neither are the needs of the person who has done

the wrong or the harm. So there is this void and disconnection, and a growing [sense] of alienation and shame and just the massive emotional disconnections between people. I think restorative brings people back into a sense of community... You know, this is hard work but we are a community and we're about reforming connections and bonds... bonds that have already been broken. So it is basically our ways of working with broken laws... it is the idea that harm is caused in a relationship, so rules are important, but it's the shifting from the rules being broken to relationships being broken (Participant 9).

Once again the notion of collaboration was emphasized as significant for learning to occur in an educational setting. One participant described divisions between different curriculum departments as the creation of “silos,” signifying a division among faculty, which ultimately fosters a divisive climate that is not conducive to learning.

... what we are starting to see, and particularly in secondary schools, is that restorative practices are leading to a breaking down of silos between curriculum areas. When we talk about learning in the New Zealand documents, the silos of faculties within the secondary school is often a limiter to that integration happening. Restorative practices seems to be a way of opening a window between departments, because you can't have situations where the teachers in one faculty are committed to and respond to students and building relationships in one way and another faculty they

do it in a quite different way. That just sets students up for confusion and restorative practices sets up for failure. So... I think that's one of the big benefits of RP is that building shared understanding of what it means to be a learner and what it means to be a teacher in a particular educational setting (Participant 4).

Community Support- Families

The next speaker reported the significance of family and community support and highlighted that access to individuals is what makes RP possible in a school.

What makes it possible is you've got a captive audience... You've got a community with a clear boundary around it... you've got a school community... you know who everybody is and where they all are on-site, so you have access to them. That makes it possible - you can get the players in the room, you have access to them. In terms of circles or mediation or a conference or something like that... You know who the people are, you are in relationship with those people, you have access to them, you can call them together and you can all be in the same space at the same time. If that wasn't possible, it would be really hard to do restorative processes... Another part that makes it possible is the ongoing relationships between people in the school community. Because we are a community we're in relationship, and we're in relationships for as long as we are in that community... also, we try to teach it through these

disconnected ways, such as these are the rules. The school can be in an ongoing relationship with families, with multiple siblings coming through school. School staff can be part of a family's life for fifteen years or more (Participant 6).

The speaker here stressed that ongoing relationships with families are important, because often several family members will be enrolled in the same school. Furthermore, the participant noted that building relationships with family members increases the opportunity for access, which helps the restorative process move forward more smoothly toward resolutions.

Another participant reported that parental involvement is important and added that schools at all levels are collaborating and informing each other about their progress with RP.

The whole school must be involved, but I also think parents need to be involved. We have a situation with schools now that we call a community of learning. So all of the schools in this area are involved with the early childhood center, the primary schools ..., the intermediate schools and high schools. So they have this what they call community of learning, so it's around what's happening... We become informed about what's happening and sort of the progress. It's all connected... so I think that that sort of commitment needs to come from everywhere, but at the moment it's just around learning. Learning is only going to happen if the child is happy (Participant 6).

Again parental involvement was reported as being important. Participant 2 reported that parent's need to get involved in their child's education.

... Getting the parents involved is important... parents need to be committed to their children's education. I think you would have a much greater chance of being successful... A lot of parents are busy and a lot of kids are living without their parents, or they might be living with their grandparents... but it's really seeing the community as the way a child's behavior can be changed that is important (Participant 2).

It appears that whole school and parental involvement is significant for successful outcomes. The speaker added that the commitment to learning involves the entire community, including the parents, and also noted that learning will only happen for the student if they are happy with their environment.

Parental involvement can also be a barrier at times. This speaker added that some parents will insist on punitive responses, because they do not understand what a restorative school is about.

And then there are the parents... Who insist that somebody gets a consequence, and don't believe that there's been any proper resolution until there has been a consequence. That's another problem... so there's parents that do not understand what a restorative school means (Participant 5).

Ongoing relationships in school communities and families was noted as a strength for successful RP implementation. Therefore, the stronger the

relationship is with community and families the more successful the outcomes are going to be for students. However, parental knowledge of RP seems to be a significant factor for parental involvement in the RP process.

Some families have issues with privacy, which makes it difficult for schools to know how to care for them.

With some families, there are issues of privacy and so on. Families often don't want schools to know, because they want the school to be a site where that young person goes and is treated as a young person and not as a mental health problem, but how do we know how to care for and alleviate and be on the lookout for concerns and be part of their well-being if we don't know? (Participant 3).

Some families prefer to keep knowledge about their child private, as they do not want schools to treat their child differently. However, this can be problematic for the RP process, because the school is unable to assess the behaviors of the student and provide them with the appropriate care and regard. The next speaker reported that some parents prefer punishment rather than the RP approach. This may be due to retributive discourses about discipline.

We still get lots of parents wondering why we're not giving more detentions for being late or being truant. So they don't understand that those ongoing conversations could have more meaning than just throwing them into a room for half an hour (Participant 10).

Again, parental awareness and knowledge of RP may help alleviate some of the resistance that schools are getting from parents. However, parents can be generally skeptical about restorative practice, particularly if their child is the one who has been harmed.

Schools are telling us that parents are quite skeptical... If their own child is involved as the wronged party... it's a natural response as a parent that you want your child's rights to be upheld... In theory, when parents hear about it... when you get a child that's coming into the school and it's part of the induction where they're talking restorative and what that means... parents think it's great... they say, "Yeah, we want our kids to be involved in that kind of environment." But, when they are involved in a situation where their child has been harmed through an incident, they want action... and so the school has to do a lot of work in preparing the parent, so that they can see there's going to be a just outcome, even though it won't be the sort of outcome that they might have originally wanted (Participant 4).

Again, the notion of parental knowledge of RP was highlighted as significant to alleviate some of the skepticism that parents feel about the RP process. Preparation is a significant piece for helping parents understand what the RP process is all about. When the parent realizes that it's not a soft option and that there will be justice, the response is more favorable. Another speaker reported that parents are skeptical at first, but after they see a conference in action and see how it works, they feel more positive about it.

I've heard really good feedback about it from parents. Every time we do a conference we hand out a questionnaire or survey and I have never received negative feedback from anybody... People are skeptical at first but when they go through it and see how it works, they are completely positive about it (Participant 6).

Participant 12 reported that sometimes, it is best not to involve the parents in the RP process, as it has the potential to make matters worse at times. Schools have discretion in whether or not parents are involved in an RP process.

Sometimes schools know ahead of time that the parents are volatile and unpredictable and that it might just be better to have the meeting without the parents present... and just tell them about it later (Participant 12).

Again, preparation was noted as significant to successful outcomes with the RP process. Once parents see it for themselves, they seem to respond well to it.

Well, you know I think generally, kids say... it is just amazing to be listened to... and parents will say we were treated very respectfully and that... I have a better understanding of what the problem because we heard from everyone. So kids respond to the fairness, peace, and being understood and listened to. When you start out in a curious space, rather than telling kids that they are bad, they respond well to that. But parents who participate in the really serious RP processes, who have been prepared properly... the better the preparation, the more people will get

out of the process. So it's a real quality assurance issue. So you have to make sure that if you're inviting someone to a restorative process that has never tripped across one in their entire life, that they need know what it's about... what it's going to look like, sound like, feel like... what are the philosophical underpinnings of the process and what they are likely to be asked to do and say in one of these meetings (Participant 12).

How Restorative Practices Make a Difference

It appears that RP has made a difference in the reduction of disciplinary responses and has increased student cooperation and learning in classrooms.

RP has had a reduction in the disciplinary sanctions that are built on punishment and increased cooperation and focus on learning classrooms.

This approach has also shown a decrease in suspensions, indefinite suspensions, attendance improvement, and not as many kids being sent to the office. More and more classroom teachers are taking responsibility for dealing with their own stuff. Also, bullying is reduced, because kids are infinitely kinder to each other... and just general misbehavior. As kids get absorbed into the culture of the school... in the end, there will be groups that say, "No, we don't do that here." "Stop it, we don't do that here."

Anecdotal from schools that have become serious about this stuff. One particular school here in New Zealand had the highest suspension rates per capita of students, and below the national average in results. And within the space of about two or three years, they completely reversed

that, to the point where they had no suspensions and also their results began to look above average... above the national average, which is great... the restorative approach was never designed to improve results, but it is the result of improved relationships in the classroom that allows a greater focus on teaching and learning... that's where the link is. And one little primary school that I worked with in another state in Australia... there was a new principal and when she arrived there, she had kids climbing up on the roof, climbing out of windows, and doing all sorts of dreadful things until... and of course the learning was negligible because of the rioting that was happening in classrooms. So in the space of the year or two because she introduced restorative practices, the kids settled into the classroom, and then she could focus on learning... but until she got the relationships right, the learning wasn't happening (Participant 12).

Participant 12 emphasized that the RP approach in New Zealand is making enormous differences on the rates of suspensions, indefinite suspensions and attendance, even when not consciously targeting such outcomes.

Eliminating Shame and Blame

RP eliminates shame and blame, which appears to make a difference for school cultures. The next speaker reported that when shame and blame are alleviated in a school environment, that people are more open to talk about their feelings, and in doing so, learning and healing becomes more possible. Several

participants reported the significance of alleviating shame and blame for healing to take place.

When there is an environment that alleviates shame and blame and stigma and retribution and all of that... that's going to encourage people to speak out about the barriers to learning that they are encountering... whether it is about harassment or their own behavior (Participant 3).

Restorative Practices is a community response... a group of people coming together and asking what happened here? Who is to blame? And how might we make that right? So it's the opposite of putting the blame on people. And it's kind of a collective taking up of responsibility. So ideas of retributive justice for instance... say somebody did something, and the act requires justice... that idea is an individualistic idea... It puts the blame on the person... it shifts the responsibility on the individual, where I think that restorative practices, the definition, is a more collective understanding of who we are and how we are going to proceed. I'm referring to liberalism and neoliberalism ideas of connecting individual responsibility. In New Zealand, there's something about collective that makes restorative practices more acceptable (Participant 1).

The responsibility for healing harm is on the community rather than just on the individual. This community responsibility to addressing harm is the antithesis of an individualistic response to harm, which solely focuses on individual responsibility. The speaker here highlights the two differences, by underscoring

that New Zealand embraces collective responsibility to harm, which may be why RP is more acceptable in this country.

Breakthroughs

The RP approach is transformative. Participant 12 reported that on many levels the RP approach is capable of transforming lives for the better through behavior management and relationship-building. Additionally, when done properly, it can transform culture.

I would have to say the big breakthrough is really, understanding that taking up this approach to problem solving is absolutely transformative. It is capable of transforming relationships, it's transforming behaviors, but it's transformed it because it changes... if it's done properly, it changes the culture of the place. So it simply becomes how we are here. This is how we are... we're thoughtful... we're kind... we're accountable... we take responsibility... we understand what we are to each other... and it's just this extraordinary gift for getting a community together, no matter if it's a small community in a classroom, a larger community in a school, a community in a neighborhood, or whatever the community is... but everyone's book is open at the same page... that we are going to live better lives with each other... and if that's the case, our own personal lives are going to be better as well (Participant 12).

Participant 12 stressed that what makes RP significant is that it brings people together as a community to work through problems, which was noted as an “extraordinary gift” that provides hope for living better lives.

No Limits

One participant reported that there are no limits with the RP approach. It can be practiced in any type of setting where people are gathered.

The only thing that holds us back is our imaginations. So, I had a teacher ask me whether or not she could use the restorative skills in the mental health field, and I said absolutely because at the moment there are people starting to use the restorative process with families and patients who have mental health issues... so we're using it in hospitals now where doctors may have made some terrible mistakes that cost someone a life (Participant 12).

The respondent stressed that the possibilities of RP are endless and the only thing holding people back from the process making a difference in society is their imagination. There appears to be an enormous amount of flexibility with this approach, as an effective response to healing relationships and addressing harm in any type of setting where people are gathered.

Restorative Practices is the Glue

One respondent stressed that RP is the glue that holds everything together. When I asked the participants if other programs can work with RP or if they can be useful on their own, here is how one responded:

When you look at the change literature about a particular innovation or program, it cannot ever just stand alone... and for restorative practice to be as successful as possible, it is the glue... you know the relationship piece... it's the glue that holds everything together in schools... everything (Participant 12).

I guess I can only really talk about New Zealand at this point, because there is such a strong voice from school leadership all over New Zealand to say, "It's alright we can do this school-wide positive behavioral support, or this PB4L stuff." But actually we think that the glue is the restorative piece. There were plenty of schools that have already embarked on the restorative piece and then the PB4L arrived. The PB4L people said that PB4L is evidenced-based and restorative practice hasn't been proven to work. In which case a bunch of fairly influential school officials stood up and said what a load of rubbish, we've been doing it for years and it's absolutely fantastic. So there were a few people within a few districts around New Zealand, who actually went through the trouble of assembling the data from schools to show... that when they took up a restorative approach, their learning outcomes improved (Participant 12).

Participant 12 emphasized that RP is the glue that holds everything together. Therefore, it can work well with virtually any program, as it is the relationship piece that produces successful outcomes. Therefore, it can work well

with virtually any program, as it was noted that it is the relationship piece that supports other programs to be successful. It is not a question of whether or not RP can be successful on its own, because the evidence here shows that it can. The question is whether or not other programs can be successful on their own without RP.

Vision- School Culture

The next participant emphasized that RP is a no shame or blame, alternative approach to punitive responses, which are known not to work in reinforcing good behavior and can potentially cause more harm to individuals and schools.

Punishment doesn't work. I've never seen kids that have been punished get back into school and reconnect with their friends and colleagues in a way that restorative practices have. A punitive approach has quite different energies. I think that a punitive approach creates resistance, denial, blame and avoidance. It also creates fear and blind compliance. It doesn't engage. So, a school based on restorative practices offers quite a different culture of shared ownership, inclusive involvement, of valuing each member of the learning process and learning community, of being valued. You know... like my point of view is valued and respected and attended to and contributive to making a difference. On another level, restorative practices teach a lot. I think being involved in restorative practices develops a lot of capabilities within individuals that a punitive

model or other approaches may not develop, because we are all involved in contributing, we are all a part of it. One learns things such as managing self and managing others... These are two of the key competencies in the New Zealand curriculum.... It's learning about emotional regulation, about communication, about the awareness of others and consideration of other points of view... it's about respect and respecting difference... all these skills and qualities associated with how to be in relationships are nurtured and developed and strengthened through restorative practices (Participant 3).

The speaker underscored a vision of what a school is about and noted that there is more learning that takes place with the RP approach than the punitive approach. One lesson from the RP approach is that students learn how to manage themselves and manage others.

New Zealand has a national education curriculum that is boiled down to five key competencies:

“The New Zealand Curriculum identifies five key competencies:

- Thinking
- Relating to others
- Using language, symbols, and texts
- Managing self
- Participating and contributing”

(<http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Key-competencies>)

At first glance, participant 3 seems to be speaking about rejection of the possibility of students engaging in code switching but it is probably better to read it as an argument in favor of consistency when it comes to the building of school culture. The respondent stressed that restorative practices are about building community and responding to harm collaboratively, in contrast to traditional hierarchical power structures in school organizations, largely influenced by external power structures. A collectivist perspective appears to be a dominant theme emerging from the data describing how stakeholders embrace restorative practices. The emphasis was on how everyone in the school community must be actively involved in RP for the school climate to benefit. When everyone has a shared understanding of the school values, there is less confusion, which enables more successful outcomes for school communities. Participant 4 also highlighted that one of the benefits of RP is that the schools build a shared understanding of their various roles in the school community and the meaning of these roles.

Participant 9 spoke about “levels” in a school community and suggested that RP attends to harm at the various levels from classroom community to the larger school community.

There are layers of communities in schools. There's classroom community, and there are multiple communities within a larger community, so at that level, restorative is noticing and taking care of harm at all those different levels... right from small breakdowns between peers and friends

to breakdowns between teachers and students and it sort of enables people to grow and learn... so rather than it just being, “You’ve done the wrong thing,” and “pathologizing,” it’s growing from that sense of alienation and disconnection from others and being welcomed back or reintegrated (Participant 9).

The speaker here emphasized that “pathologizing” and isolating individuals works against the creation of a culture of inclusion. The more disconnect students feel from school, the more problematic it becomes for schools to manage student behavior. It’s not so much when things break down, it’s how to engage with the community.

Another vision shared by another respondent was that teachers receive the necessary RP skills through training and that RP knowledge and awareness extends out to neighborhoods and other various areas of communities. The speaker further expressed a vision for hospitals and noted that when doctors make mistakes, that they are made accountable for them through dialogue. It is noteworthy that the speaker emphasized that RP is useful anywhere people are gathered.

My personal vision is about exploring the outer limits but I would like... if I was going to dream a little, I would like the skills in teacher training for starters... I would want to reach workplaces and cul-de-sacs’ in neighborhoods... I think parenting... I think neighborhoods, schools, teacher training, public sector workplaces... you know... so that in the

hospital you will see restorative problem-solving... you know, when doctors have made mistakes... that there is an honest dialogue around all of that kind of stuff. And it is happening in places such as in university campuses, so that's happening too... colleges in New York state is really big on the restorative stuff, and I just saw recently restorative stuff in preschools and nursing homes... anywhere where people gather. When I think of my first early steps back in the early 90s I suppose, I knew I was onto something... It felt really... 23 years now down the track, I am every bit excited today as I was then... and I never for one minute imagined how this whole field has exploded. But it's still marginal... it's still in the periphery (Participant 12).

A Vision for Special Needs Students

The participant went on to say that there are no limits with RP and that it can even help students "on the spectrum." However, the speaker warns that this particular vulnerable group should be handled with caution.

The limits of our RP are yet to be explored. Where is the outer limit? I do not know yet, because we are still experimenting. But I would think that if you apply some principles around decision-making, that is... and people need to be willing to participate. That's my bottom line. And I've got to be honest about what's happened and I've got to be willing to participate in a difficult conversation. So in terms of schools, because we've written a book now about how you use restorative practice with kids who have

special needs... saying, oh you cannot possibly use this approach with the child who is on the spectrum is a nonsense... or, you cannot do that with the child, because the child has an intellectual disability... that's also nonsense. It's about managing the risk of putting young people and adults through it. So... if someone is very vulnerable, extremely vulnerable... it might be sufficient to send this group over-the-top, so I am cautious (Participant 12).

Another respondent shared a vision for a restorative ethos and emphasized that student voice and agency should be honored and that adults must realize that students can be the experts in their own healing.

What is needed is a restorative ethos. They need a context. They can't coexist in the school just by stripping away punitive, retaliatory understandings. So it needs to be about honoring and acknowledging the wisdom and the voice of young people... and the expertise that resides in young people... that it's not just adults who have accurate perspectives and know what needs to be done to fix the stuff... that attitude won't help restorative practices (Participant 3).

Implementation

Intervention and Prevention

Participant 4 reported that RP in schools involves essentially low level, preventative responses to problems that arise in schools. It appears that

prevention is more prevalent than intervention.

There are some elements of that high level conference stuff... where you've got some structures that repair relationships, but actually most of the work we do here is where the relationships don't get broken in the first place... more preventative... the restorative essentials... which is that all day, everyday stuff. So as you increase the intensity you become more of an interventionist (Participant 4).

The speaker noted here that most of the work is the whole school preventative work. However, the more severe the case the higher the level of intensity, which is the intervention piece.

Implementation and Readiness

When the participants were asked what conditions were required for successful RP implementation, here is how they responded:

So the conditions required would be valuing it, honoring it, prioritizing relationships, giving time and space to this process... these are the conditions that we are about in this community (Participant 3).

Participant 3 reported that one of the conditions required is that RP must be valued and honored, while prioritizing relationships. The next speaker noted that a good team of people who are passionate about it and student training and involvement are conditions that can bring about successful outcomes.

You have to have a good team of people... a team that is very passionate about it. I think now moving forward, I would like to see in the next year a

group of students who are involved in it. Students are trained here in year nine and it's part of their orientation to college, it's called the appropriate behaviors course and they get the language and on top of that there is the peer support program (Participant 6).

Buy-in from all staff, understanding at least the basics of how RP works, having willing participants, and preparation were noted as conditions for successful implementation. Participant 12 reported that RP implementation requires a strong foundation, which first involves inquiring about their readiness. The speaker emphasized that implementation of RP requires a lifelong commitment and needs to be managed very carefully. Therefore, schools that are interested in implementing RP must prove readiness and have leadership buy-in before any RP work can take place at the school site.

One of the most important aspects I think about a school starting to think about restorative practices is how prepared are they for a very comprehensive change management program. So there are some schools that have so much other stuff going on to add the restorative thing on top of everything else is just heading for disaster. There are some schools that have a whole lot of toxic stuff happening, like I get asked sometimes to come in and... like we've got a few issues in a school that think... well, I'm sure if we do restorative practices it will resolve anything well, no it won't actually, because the ground has to be favorable... the ground has to be fertile for the seeds of restorative practices to grow well. So in this next

book for writing, which is going to go beyond the basics. Some colleagues and I actually are writing the chapter on readiness. And there's a questionnaire that we have adapted from someone around what the school experience of organizational change has been in the past. And there are some indicators, depending on how they answer, whether they are primed and ready for change, or it would be really risky and they need to be incredibly cautious, and they need to get some more stuff sorted, so that would be one of my prime themes is how ready is this school to a take four or five year journey that needs to be managed really carefully... so this would be one of the first things... and then secondly, what is the capacity for leadership to buy into this, because if leadership doesn't buy in, you've got no hope (Participant 12).

The speaker underscored the significance of 1) RP implementation readiness and 2) leadership buy-in. The participant stressed that the RP approach will not be successful without these two fundamental tenets being present at a school site. RP implementation involves "strategic" preparation, which requires a lot of patience. Developing a mission statement, examining policies and preparing for training, requires careful planning that takes time.

I suppose for me, it's been a very long journey and we had to work very slowly and I like things to be done quite quickly so I learned a lot about being tolerant and patient. I realized at the time I did a lot of background work... a lot about putting a draft... or a strategic plan together for

restorative practices.... And how we can do it over time and create mission statements... looking at policies... Looking at training and what's the best way to get the training, so there is a lot of the background work before it actually started to blossom in our school... and until the school caught up with my vision... or, the vision of my colleague and myself... things started to happen... It took time... a lot of time. Approximately nine or ten years now since we started. Our school is now about 70% restorative, but I would expect us to be 90% (Participant 6).

Participant 6 reported that after nearly 10 years of implementation, one school in New Zealand is only 70% restorative, indicating that there is still work to be done. Additionally, this comment shows that it takes a significant amount of time to become a fully restorative school, which may not even be possible.

Buy-in from staff. Understanding of how it works. Even basically just restorative chats in the classroom or an approach in dealing with students in the classroom. Also, willing participants, if it were a bigger restorative meeting... and preparation (Participant 11).

The next speaker reported there are combinations of factors required, such as a skilled facilitator who can listen to multiple stories and identify the core problems, and caring individuals that are willing to listen to stories of pain and suffering and find solutions to help heal the pain so that people can move forward in their lives.

So I think it's a combination of things. First of all, it would be the skill of the facilitator to draw out people's stories, because for a kid to get suspended... to do something that warrants a suspension, there is a story behind a story and possibly ten stories behind that... so everyone who's involved in the incident that might trigger a suspension has a story to tell about their involvement in that incident... that is... the community of people who have been impacted by an incident are those who did it and those who had it done to them. So a facilitator needs to be able to get those stories out. I think one of the most powerful and transformative stuff that happens at a conference is when you hear the stories... when you listen to people's pain, and so... it sort of penetrates the kind of hard shell that people might have built. And they suddenly realize that they more like each other than dislike each other. And when it's not about blame and it's about what's happened here, and what harm has been done... and the focus is on, how are we going to fix it. Then I think people come together from being separate individuals into this group of "we"... from individuals to collective action to solve problems... what can "we" do to help fix this problem? So it gives people the opportunity to get their stories out, and to be understood... to be able to unload all their pain, and have that touch other people... and so everyone ends up feeling understood... then I think we're on the path to say... well, how are we going to fix it? So you need to deal with people's feelings first before you turn to the intellect of problem

solving... and it doesn't matter whether it's a circle or a conference. So I think it's the interest... it's being seriously interested in someone else, whether they have been incredibly naughty or not... being genuinely interested in someone, whether they have committed a wrong act or have been victimized... being seriously interested is the first step and showing someone that you care for them. It's very, very compelling to have someone interested in you in a very genuine way (Participant 12).

Participant 12 reported numerous conditions required for successful implementation of RP. It seems that the most important condition required is the notion that genuinely caring for individuals is at the forefront of the RP process. A school culture that values caring for others is likely to have more success with this approach. One participant reported that successful outcomes with RP require a long-term commitment for change and sufficient funding.

There's got to be a willingness to engage in long-term change... there's got to be sufficient leadership... there's got to be sufficient funding... there has to be people who understand the change management process and how complex it is (Participant 12).

The next participant reported that school readiness contributes substantially to whether or not RP implementation will be successful.

I think that whether restorative justice practices work or don't work, largely depends on the kind of culture of the school... the extent to which the school is prepared to say... this is the agreement of our community. Harm

happens because human beings are bumping up against each other...

Let's not go down the line of individual blame of responsibility... Let's go

down the collective line and say; "How can we help to make things right?"

It's the collective work that makes it work... blaming and shaming does not

work... so I think the success of restorative practices depends on the

larger conversations about the value of us collectively as a community,

working together to make this a community that has a relational mindset,

and a community with a relational interest... that we're not just here to

gain knowledge and compete... that we're actually here to do life together.

And in doing life together, we're actually training our young people to do

life in the community as well... beyond school... together (Participant 1).

Based on the responses from the participants regarding conditions

required for successful implementation, it appears that school readiness and

preparation is a significant factor for RP implementation. School readiness

requires a commitment from a school, as RP involves a significant shift in the

way people communicate with each other and deal with problems. Participant 1

noted that although RP requires that everyone at the school site are on board

and that it is a lifelong commitment, the implications for school culture and

learning can transcend beyond the school site.

The next participant stressed the importance of people seeing how the

process works. However, in order for stakeholders to be open to the process,

they must first realize that the current processes of handling problems that arise in schools are not working.

I think one of the things that they can do is when they see it working.

There's nothing like a firsthand experience, or seeing something and actually experiencing how things could be. Or just reading about it... going on to face book pages that are related to school change... or, getting speakers in. There's lots of ways I think that people can be inspired and motivated to see how things could be done that's different. But I think that fundamentally, you have to realize that the way you are doing things right now is not working and that there's got to be a better way. And once you start thinking like that... once you start having the idea introduced to you, then you will start to look at solutions to the problems that you've identified (Participant 2).

The next speaker articulated that what moves a school culture forward is the ethos of RP. It becomes the center of everything that goes on in a school.

What really drives the school is that RP is embraced as a central ethos behind everything that we do (Participant 3).

Values and Mission Statements

Participant 10 stressed that implementation readiness involves having a strong mission statement and values that clearly state the vision for the school community. The speaker noted that these values become embedded as part of the language at the school that supports the RP process.

If it's aligned to the values... You know, when we think about the school community. For example my daughter's school - their mission statement is "Passionately preparing people for life" not preparing them for Stanford... it's not that (Participant 3).

The next speaker also stressed the significance of having values and a vision for a school.

I guess it depends on their values and their vision. I heard it's been a lot easier here since we've changed our values because they kind of fit. I think that's one thing we were told by someone who was coming in and working with us around our restorative practices because we couldn't name our values... it was hard. So I guess it would be hard to bring it into a country or an institution that doesn't value that way of thinking... but I can't see why there should be limitations around it... it was kind of like all about girls being active learners and engaging and striving for excellence, but the values were not easy to name, so we changed it to just having our values around the four C's— Courage, Curiosity, Compassion, and Community. It just fit so nicely with restorative practices... so whenever we have restorative chats with the girls, it's quite easy just to name what you're doing isn't really fitting with our value of Community, or wasn't a very Compassionate thing that you did, or you need to take the Courage to actually engage in this... so it's been really easy just to bring the values

in without naming them as such... but always having them present
(Participant 10).

The significant point made here was that the values of a school must be in place before RP can begin making a difference for a school culture. The four C's noted here "Courage, Curiosity, Compassion, and Community" become part of the language embedded in the RP processes. These began as standard school values that served as reminders for stakeholders regarding the vision the school holds, which provides a foundation for successful RP implementation.

Participant 2 articulated that schools need to envision what type of student they to send out into society. This conscious effort may help produce the mission and vision for the school.

When we think about what kind of graduate we want... or, what kind of person we want to walk out our door that we would be proud of... not just that they were on honor's roll for the last five years, and that they've got a scholarship to Stanford or whatever... yeah, we can be proud of them for those things... but, if they are arrogant and if they are aggressive, and if they are racist and bigoted and all these other things...would we be proud of that? (Participant 2).

The next speaker emphasized that a school should be well-prepared to take on this approach. The preparation sometimes involves a survey.

We are just developing some tools at the moment... but for example, there is a school in New Zealand here, where I'm going in a month or so to do a

whole day with all of the staff... it is not a huge school, so it's not like dealing with 120 people it's more like 30 people... so we sent them the survey and even though the school is committed, because there is a new principal who has had restorative training in the past and he knows that the school needs to move along and needs to do something new to get out of a time warp, and some of the people who have been there for many years are ready to move on... so I think he's prepared to do that... but sometimes... like I wouldn't refuse a school of RP implementation if the survey came back showing that they are not yet ready, but I would say, let's proceed with caution. And then I will tell them I will see you in six months or twelve months, but in the meantime, here is some work that you need to do to sort yourself out... including every staff member becoming very, very clear what the values are that the school wants to live by... but not only to be fluent in those values, but what are the behaviors that are the evidence of those values in action... and is the senior leadership team walking the walk, as well as talking the talk? (Participant 12).

This contribution underlines the importance of doing the preparation work systematically for a school interested in implementing RP. The point made here was that leadership buy-in may be a start in the right direction, but school readiness is key to successful outcomes with RP. If a school is not ready, the consultant will provide them with some preparation work such as the development of values that the stakeholders agree on for the school community

to live by. The speaker stressed that the entire school community should be fluent in these values.

The same speaker went on to say that one way to test whether a school has embedded values that everyone respects and lives by while at school, she would ask a random person on the school grounds what their school values are, and in a school that has successfully embedded the values this random person would be able to answer the question whether they were a student or staff.

So today when I was working with people from ten or so different schools, I said if I enrolled into your school and just bumped into a standard child out in the corridor somewhere, or out in the yard, and I asked him what are the school values... and I asked what them what the values are...and if they couldn't tell me, after they had been in school for a term, then there's work to be done. If the staff can't tell me what the values are, and they may answer well, one I think is respect and the other I don't know... but they aren't fluent, and you have to be fluent in this stuff, because the values underpin the vision... so everyone in the school should know what the values are, and the students should know within a reasonable amount of time, at least after one term or one semester. The vision has to be embraced by everyone, and it's the senior leadership's job to remind people of the purpose of why they're there. Because in the change literature, and certainly in the chapter we talked about vision, and we literally talked about vision... it is very clear that the vision is usually

under-communicated... So it is no good for the principal to stand up at the beginning of the year and do the big Nelson Mandela... “Brethren we have gathered here today, this is what we’re all about”... it’s got to come out of anyone in the leadership or middle-management position’s mouth all the time and it’s got to come out of teachers’ mouths all the time... we’re here because this is what we believe... that’s important to do. So you know... it’s just critical that there are basic values and behaviors about what we’re all about here at this school. Don’t expect to see a behavior that you haven’t first taught. And if respect is one of them, then both people in a conversation need to understand what respect means to the other person... so my idea of respect is listening while I’m speaking... not being rude... being polite... helping... if I got a bundle of stuff and I need a door opened, someone will come and do that... speak to me politely and I will do that for kids as well (Participant 12).

The significant point made here is that people cannot be made responsible for behavior that they do not know or have not been taught. Therefore, it is a school’s responsibility to instill the values that they expect from the students and make sure that the students are aware of these values and can name them at any given moment. These values become an integral part of the RP implementation process, as it becomes a standard language. Therefore, it is imperative that schools prepare students with this language by instilling values

that everyone has knowledge of, as it becomes the cornerstone to expectations and outcomes of school culture.

Here is an example of the value of “respect.” The speaker noted that there would always be differences in schools, which are known to create inevitable conflict. However, if everyone lived by the value of “respect” and understood that there is an appropriate way people should be treated while they are on the school grounds, then this can make a difference in how people respond to differences when conflict arises.

There are people that are not necessarily accepted by other people in the school, but they could still believe that this is how we should relate to each other and this is how people should be treated... with respect (Participant 2).

The value of “Respect” is an example of a value that a school can use to prepare for RP implementation and then continue using for successful outcomes for the vision of the school.

Buy-in at a Political Level

One participant reported that the reason why RP is being widely accepted by school leaders in New Zealand is because the New Zealand government has bought in to the idea. The respondent added that decision-making in the educational system is essentially politically charged. If political buy-in, such as the Department of Education and other State and local accrediting agencies, were to see the value in this approach, funding would become available for

school districts in the United States. It seems that buy-in at the political level is critical for movement of RP in schools.

I think one of the things that have been helpful in New Zealand is that the government has decided that this is what is going to happen. So, in the United States, I suppose, it would be the same... if the state decided that they are going to be a restorative justice state, then they would influence the politicians in the state to find the funding that they would need to pass it on to the school districts... and the schools would then pass on down to other schools... But, I think buy-in has got to come from the top first (Participant 2).

Participant 2 stressed that buy in must come from the top for RP to be successful.

Significance of Leadership Buy-In

Common themes emerged about leadership and buy-in when the participants were asked what makes RP effective in schools. One participant emphasized that it is imperative that leadership in schools “talk the talk and walk the talk.” Therefore, not only is leadership buy in critical for the success of RP, but leadership must also exemplify the behavior and actions that are conducive to the overall vision they have for their school. Although the terms describing school leadership, such as “senior leadership” in New Zealand, and “administration” in the US differ, they are the same thing. The difference in New Zealand in contrast to US schools is the “middle management.” This additional

layer provides more support when problems arise. The point made here is that only the most serious offenses involve the senior leadership team.

The absolute first, second, third, fourth, and fifth important thing, is that the senior leadership has to talk the talk and walk the talk. Now, one of the substantive differences I think between our schools and American schools is that we have middle management. So there are people who were heads of faculty, such as deans, so that the difficult situations don't get outsourced up to the senior leadership team, they get sent to the middle layer in a school. So what makes it effective is a clear delineation between walls and responsibilities... so for example, teachers' responsibilities in terms of behavior stuff is x... the next layer up might be a dean or a head of faculty or a head of curriculum, or something, and they handle slightly more complex issues. You might send really complex issues to the school counselor, or... and if it's really terribly serious, then it may end up with the senior leadership team, and they will make some serious decisions about whether or not the student's enrollment can continue. But if you haven't got leadership support, they're not going to fund the appropriate ongoing training. So leadership is one thing... quality assurance is another thing. Data collection... so data-driven problem solving... so where are the hotspots in school? How can we put a focus on those hotspots? The hotspots might be that there is a bad vibe going on amongst year nine boys at the moment, because there are lots of year nine boys getting into

trouble around whatever... or the year nine girls are really doing dreadful stuff on Facebook, so let's put a focus on that, but through a restorative lens... so effective training, effective maintenance, quality assurance, data-driven problem-solving, senior leadership support. And I would even say that even at the teacher level... classroom teacher level... that restorative practice is part of their performance appraisal. So this is my idea of a heavenly school... teachers are expected to kill their own snakes before they send them further up the ladder... so this cuts down on outsourcing. So every country is different on how they appraise teachers, but appraisal should be an ongoing thing... it's between me and the person who is my supervisor... so it might be an informal thing once a term, but certainly once a year, we look at my goals, we look at where I need to improve, we look at the quality of my relational practice with young people, all of that. For teachers to take this seriously, they need to know that they are going to be observed around the way they handle problems with kids, and they need to be held accountable for the good things they are doing and for the patches in their practice where they are not living up to the school vision. They need to know that they will be held accountable for what they are doing and the patches in their practice where they are not living up to the school vision. The senior leadership team has to have high expectations and give high support... so when a school is experimenting with this, which is usually over a period of two, to three or

four years, people can get away with not using RP, but once it is embedded, the senior leadership needs to say... this is no longer optional for you... this is the way we do things here, and if you don't like it, you need to think about whether or not your values match our school values and that if there is a conflict, then off to go... go get a job somewhere else (Participant 12).

Again, the emphasis was made on the significance of leadership buy-in and community support. The speaker here further suggested that stakeholders must understand that acting out is a normal part of growing up. As such, there needs to be a means to correct the mistakes that will inevitably be made by students, without resorting to a punitive response. The speaker also stressed that leadership and community support is needed when problems arise in schools.

A lot of it starts with leadership in a school... and the understanding that a punitive approach to managing relationships is not enough. There has to be a climate of understanding that teenagers will be teenagers. We all make mistakes, and people have to have an opportunity to put things right. I think that what enables learning, what it means to be a person in the community, is that they understand how to repair harm once it has been done. It's good for them, I think. And there are schools that are much more authoritarian with a more punitive regime, and some schools seem to work best with this approach when the school population is much

more docile in terms of accepting of authority or power. But, in a relational context like we have here, where dominant cultural groups are much more used to the idea of family and support and looking out for each other, caring for each other, restorative practices are an easier way for them to become part of the school culture. But to try and impose restorative practices on a school culture that is individualistic and competitive... it's a much bigger task. And for a lot of those schools, they don't think that's necessary, because it's about getting the results. And the results that they are getting are often at the expense of the humanity of the people in the school (Participant 2).

Participant 2 suggested that leadership and community support, including families, is necessary for successful implementation of RP. Furthermore the speaker highlighted that if such support does not exist in a school environment, such as one that is "individualistic" or "competitive," then it is unlikely that RP will work. RP appears to work best in schools that embrace a collective approach to problem solving, and may not work in schools that have top-down hierarchical structures.

Effective Leadership is Key

Although leadership buy-in is significant for successful RP implementation, one participant reported that effective leadership is key for long-term sustainment of RP practices in schools. RP does not appear to be just another program or fad that schools can experiment with. RP implementation is known to change

school culture and a shift in hierarchical power structures in schools. Therefore, effective leadership is needed to protect and maintain fidelity of RP implementation.

Where RP is not being implemented successfully... we see leadership who have devolved that responsibility to people who are not in a position to make important decisions around the structures and the practices in the policies that ensure that RP becomes the way we do things around here. So having leadership involved in a very visible and engaged way, plays an extremely important role. We also are seeing that schools who have taken time to have those conversations with staff... to allow staff who are less convinced to talk about why they're not convinced... this is going to be a successful way forward... not just saying this is what we're doing like, "Get on the bus"... I mean staff who are reluctant to become involved in RP if they are given the chance to make those moves in their own time, but knowing the expectation is why they will get on the bus... there needs to be an option about that... leadership will support you to do it in your own time. We see those schools as being most successful than the ones who have some kind of hero leader at the front saying, "This is what we're going to do and everyone follow me... and actually, those underlying doubts and underlying prejudices and biases are not addressed, so they continued to fester... and they stand as a barrier for people making that full movement in establishing RP... we're also seeing schools that are

involving students in a very proactive way in RP... so they become part of the restorative practice conversation, rather than just being recipients of some restorative practices strategies. Those schools seem to be making more progress towards RP becoming absolutely embedded and the way we do things around here (Participant 4).

Participant 4 discussed the significance of exemplary leadership for successful implementation of RP and stressed that schools implementing RP without effective leadership are not doing as well as schools with effective leadership. The point made here was that ineffective leadership for RP implementation in schools is known to impede the process and progress, by transferring responsibilities to others who do not possess the skills to ensure fidelity of RP policy and practices.

Again, effective leadership was reported as being key to successful implementation. Participant 9 reported that if a leader is unable to effectively convey the RP message and purpose of the approach, that buy-in would be compromised, which would impact successful outcomes of RP implementation. The speaker also stressed that no matter how much evidence there is about the successful outcomes that RP can produce, there seems always be resistance that limits its progress.

It doesn't work when your leadership is not on board and cannot articulate strongly and powerfully in the reasons why this is going to work and we don't have a community... It doesn't work if you don't have community

buy-in, which are your parents, your school government, your school governance, such as your board of trustees and your senior leadership... and I think that's what the limits are... that restorative meeting would be in everyone's best interest... schools here are concerned about their reputation... if there is a concern about how it would make the school look publicly, I don't think it will happen... and that's where I would like to see some leadership from the government and from the power of people who are instructing schools beyond... we need leadership and in really important places to begin trickling down into schools, so that we can make this happen. I don't think it's just a school thing... I think it's a whole society thing about what does justice look like. But I think that is what the limits are in schools and I think the limits are your philosophical stance, because there will always be individuals who won't buy in... but if you had a commitment and buy-in and support from your Board of Trustees and your principal... it is so much easier. It seems like we just get so far and then the doubt comes in... no matter how much data ... no matter how much evidence you put in front of them... they can't see it. It's interesting and it's frustrating, but I just learn to roll with it (Participant 9).

Again there was an emphasis placed on effective leadership for successful RP implementation, which guides RP practice and policy for schools.

As a team we see that leadership in a school that is visible and that is committed to making policies guidelines and practices enable RP to be

part of the schools way of doing things, which is extremely important (Participant 9).

And once again, commitment and the significance of leadership buy-in were stressed as a key factor in successful implementation of RP policy and practice.

In the school system, the senior management has to be on board so that the policies of the schools agree with these practices. I think that the Board of Trustees needs to be on board, the teachers, and the senior management, and then you need a team of excellence, people that kind of get this stuff and could implement it within the schools... And then more broadly you need a large percentage of the staff understanding it and putting it into practice as well (Participant 1).

Participants 1 and 9 highlight the significance of leadership buy-in as paramount for RP to improve school culture and successful implementation of RP. The speaker noted however, that there is one RP process that does not require leadership buy-in to be successful and impact change in classroom and school climate and culture. The process is known as Undercover Anti-Bullying Teams (UABT). UABT's was noted as an "expression of RP" and essentially combats bullying relationships that inevitably arise in schools, and are typically facilitated by school counselors. Although UABT's can be successful without leadership support, it is helpful when the school leader believes in the approach,

because the counselors appreciate the support and students respond well to it when the leader of the school is involved in the process.

If the senior leadership team doesn't think undercover anti-bullying teams are any good, if I still believe in them as a counselor, I could still do it. I don't need anybody else to show how these teams can eliminate bullying.

And when it comes to getting the certificate, I just need to be a little creative and think of other ways of how I can validate their activities.

However, having a certificate from the principal is a great thing, because these kids... especially kids that bully people, they may never have had a certificate at all from a principal for doing anything good. Besides that, the students that are on a team know that the principal knows about them, and there are a lot of kids that know about it, so I think it's important for the principal to support the work of the counselor. It makes it easier for the counselor. I've seen in schools where there is conflict between the principal and the counselor, and it has made it very difficult for counselors to do their work effectively... so the support from the principal is important... that relationship is critical. After a counselor has done about four or five Undercover Teams and can show just how powerful they are, you can't deny that it is effective. The principal would not be able to say that it's a ridiculous idea, because all the ideas of punishing don't work, and you can prove it... and that's how I started it in the school in 2004. I did my first undercover team, and once I became confident, and I began

seeing its power, then I said to the principal, “I found something that's really amazing.” And he said “Well, tell me about it.” Principals are interested in results primarily, and especially if it doesn't really cost much. My work doesn't cost the school anything. It's the values of the various people that have come through the school and have supported the uniqueness of this particular school. But it can be the same in any school. It just takes a few people to think that this is what is going to make a big difference and then they need to convince the principal... and so this could be anyone... and the person, if they allow it in a school, they may have to recruit other allies in more powerful positions in order to effect any change (Participant 2).

Leadership buy-in is critical for successful RP implementation and for creating a positive school culture. Participant 2 noted that counselors have a unique opportunity to experiment with an approach that helps combat bullying in schools known as UABT's. Although this approach does not require leadership buy-in, it is helpful to have leadership support when using this approach. However, it appears that this approach can be successful without leadership and can be facilitated by counselors in any school level or setting. Other speakers also supported the idea of senior leadership making a difference.

I know that it's important for schools, particularly for the senior management, the principal, and the board of trustees to be supportive of the idea (Participant 1).

Poor leadership, however, appears to be problematic. The next speaker noted that if leaders lack knowledge and skills around structures, policies, and practices, it is known to impede the process of successful implementation.

Where RP is not being implemented successfully... we see leadership who have devolved that responsibility to people who are not in a position to make important decisions around the structures and the practices in the policies that ensure that RP becomes the way we do things around here. So having leadership involved in a very visible and engaged play an extremely important role (Participant 12).

A stumbling block may be that school leaders require sufficient evidence that RP is working before they buy-in to the idea. This role lies with researchers to provide such evidence.

If you are speaking to the principal of the board, it has to be based on proof... evidence-based. And then ask them for their data on how many students they are suspending and expelling a regular basis. It's very much evidenced-based (Participant 6).

Common themes emerging from the participants about leadership buy-in for successful RP implementation was reported as highly critical for transformation of school culture to occur. Leadership buy-in and support was noted as highly critical for schools implementing RP. However, quality of leadership was also noted as being problematic if leaders lack particular

knowledge and skills. An additional common theme that emerged was the significance of family involvement and support.

How Schools Buy-in to Restorative Practices

Participant 4 reported that as RP in schools are proving to make a difference, other schools are embracing the approach in their schools and this is how it spreads.

We're seeing examples of where a school is wholeheartedly implementing RP and a neighboring school is seeing the difference it is making and so that neighboring school is approaching it in a sense that, we're seeing that it's working and we want to be a part of it. So that kind of infectious spreading of the word is starting to happen (Participant 4).

This response indicates that the spreading of RP occurs by example. As schools in New Zealand are proving that RP in making a difference for students and school culture and climate, other schools become more open to trying this approach.

Training and Professional Development

The next participant further added that RP is the future and the only way to address inevitable problems that arise in schools. The perceptions that RP is an easy option appear to be false. Participant 2 emphasized that RP is a cultural shift in punitive discourses relating to punishment, and stressed that it is not a simple task to shift this mindset. Therefore, ongoing professional development and training is necessary to sustain RP implementation and practices. The

respondent further noted that a school needs to have at least 80% buy-in from staff in order to receive the funding necessary for RP implementation and added that there will always be a percentage of resistance. As noted previously, RP shifts the punitive mindset and the way people relate to each other, which is not a minor task.

I think in its pure sense, it's the only way. It's the only future. But I think a lot of people have a misunderstanding of what restorative practices is... and students in schools where it has not been effective, where it has been part of the school culture, have seen it as just an easy way out and they learn the scripts and they learn what to say that will appear to appease adults, without really addressing, in a serious way, the harm that has been done by their actions. If the understanding is not deep enough, it seems that there are no consequences to a person's actions... and by consequences they mean most of the world would think of some sort of punitive response. There has to be ongoing professional development... ongoing training. It's not just enough to run a training session and call it a restorative justice school. I think that's ridiculous. It's shifting so many aspects about the way we relate to people. You can't just expect that you have training and that is service... It has to be a long-term commitment to a way of relating that is fundamentally different from a punitive approach or punitive model. And... the other ways get people resistant... who want punishment, or more punishment... and so those people have to

understand that they are kind of in the minority and that's not the way things are done. In order for a school to have access to the funding for restorative training, they have to have approximately 80% buy-in from the staff, or 85% of the staff must agree that they personally are going to take on board the ideas of restorative practices. Once the principal agrees that it is a good idea and that it could work, then they can approach the Ministry of Education, and they will have a discussion with the principal to see whether it's going to be a worthwhile option. And if the principal thinks that other staff would like to hear about this, they will invite someone to come in and give a presentation to the staff. At the end of the presentation, the staff has to complete an evaluation of what they heard, and make a decision as to whether they're going to be supportive of it. And... if they are, that's when the money starts to flow in and the team is set up and all the other processes that set behind the implementation of restorative practices in schools start to happen (Participant 2).

Participant 2 stressed the significance of effective leadership and noted that it is important for staff members who are not ready to buy in to the RP approach, receive the support needed to help them move forward. Whole school buy-in appears to be an ongoing endeavor for RP implementation, as there seems to always be a percentage of resistant staff members who are not ready for the change. As such, leadership support can help resistant staff members work through their misconceptions and other issues that they may have about RP

practices. Consequently, as more people buy in to the approach, more funding will become available for professional development and training, which appears to be paramount for momentum, fidelity and sustainability of RP practices long term.

Participant 4 emphasized the significance of ongoing professional development and training for all staff members. It appears that everyone working at a school site must be trained in RP and must be involved in the process including the janitor, bus driver, and front office personnel, and the students. The speaker emphasized that whole school involvement and training is key to successful implementation and outcomes.

Everyone... absolutely everyone. That's why the very first thing that we do at schools is to have a whole staff day, it's called a training day, I don't really like the word training but it's a whole staff professional development day. Some schools don't see it that broadly... they don't involve their whole staff... but, we talk to them and really encourage them to bring all their staff on board... because the reality is for the students who needs a higher level of restorative support... those students are more likely to be the focus of the circles approach or particularly a conferencing approach... they actually engage a lot with the guidance counselor, or with the front office as they arrive late, or get sent to detention for timeout... you know to get out of the teacher's hair, or get out of the classroom for half an hour... letting everyone cool down... that's the person they're engaging with... so

everyone has to be on the same page... everyone has to respond relationally or the student will get mixed messages... so bus drivers, sports coaches, janitors, etc... everyone must be on board. So in the schools where it is working the most successfully, everyone including the Board of Trustees has been involved in the learning. Just off the top of my head, I can tell you about one school, a big secondary school in Auckland, and they have been on the journey for quite a number of years, but only with us for twelve months, but independently they were exploring these ideas before they came into the program. I met them at the beginning of term three and they had just crunched their data for term two for their behavior data, and it was the first term in over fifteen years that they had not had a student suspension or stand down and they are absolutely convinced that it's because they put a real focus on whole school learning about this, including the students. They've had students, very involved in student leadership, so the students are working relationally and restoratively with their peers and everyone else who's involved in the school... right up to the learning support personnel like resource teachers of learning and behavior that come into the school about two or three times a week to deal with a child or a couple of children... so everyone needs to be involved. And they are convinced that this is why they are getting these sort of responses (Participant 4).

Involving the entire school in the professional development process was thus noted as being highly significant in terms of successful RP implementation. The notion that everyone must be involved was noted as being critical for transformation to occur. The speaker also noted that if the whole school were not involved and not trained properly, that students would receive mixed messages, which might impede the transformation process toward a positive school culture.

Another participant spoke about the significance of training for bringing a school community together. Training people in RP enables opportunities to ask questions and demystify the philosophy and tensions that may be present due to the cultural shift in practices.

This is what being part of the school community is all about... and I think some of the training from what I've seen... I've been trained from a few people over the years, and I think what is important is spending time asking questions, spending a lot of time demystifying and grappling with the philosophical tensions around it, enabling people to express their concerns, what if, and why... how can we get people to take the time to understand.... we've been doing these other practices forever... I'm not going to just switch onto it... It requires patience with facilitators... and I think that you can't do it as a one hit wonder, you have to do it as a series and you have to keep the conversation going... you can't just do a one-time training... it has to be ongoing. Like I said, I think it's a ten-year

project. I've been here six years now, and it's sort of just getting going in the last two years. So the first four years here it was coming and going coming and going... no change, no investment in training... and then we brought in an expert from Australia and things began to change... so it is about picking and choosing a leader who would resonate best with your community. Leadership listens to people and people respect them, so you first have to establish that respect. I think it's a little bit about grabbing great documents and research and good evidence, then putting it in front of them and you cannot argue with data because it's intuitively correct (Participant 9).

The speaker emphasized that implementing RP successfully requires training of all stakeholders. The participant also stressed that successful implementation takes time and consequently requires a lot of patience. The benefits that result from the training support stakeholders with the change process, and it seems that involving a competent RP consultant can help schools with the training and implementation process.

Effectiveness- Preparation- Training Barriers

Another participant noted that training requires time and support from leadership, which is critical, because training is not easy. Another point made here was that effectiveness of RP requires preparation, and time was noted as necessary for the preparation to take place. The RP process is not something

that is a quick process, and training can help people understand how to have patience when something does not seem to be working.

Being able to find a time to get to these workshops and trainings and all that... Having enough support around them, that's important... because it's hard. You're doing something new that feels kind of weird... It might not go so well... So people can give up easily and say, "This doesn't work," too early. They don't have sufficient scaffolding and support around them. So the people that are going to be doing this kind of work, they need time, they need to be able to do that... they need time for preparation, because the effectiveness rests on the preparation. And I don't just mean sitting in the room thinking about it and planning what they're going to do. I mean meeting with everybody, doing all that groundwork... coming to a space... so that takes time. So they need that time to follow up and so on. You can't just rush this... you can't whack it out in a day (Participant 3).

Again, the emphasis was made that preparation is significant for RP to be successful. Participant 9 noted that everyone involved in an RP process, including adults and students, must all be prepared and understand what an RP process is about before the process begins.

For RP to actually be able to be implemented, I think you need a really good understanding from staff and really good preparation for the students and young people, that they understand what processes they are going to be involved in... (Participant 9).

Ongoing Professional Development

The next participant reported that schools implementing RP requires a team offering continuous support to individuals. The trainings also add the additional support that helps with ongoing professional development. These two aspects provide support for the ongoing process of RP implementation.

And then of course there's the team itself at the school that's got to be continually motivating people and continually putting ideas out... so I think it's got to be planned right from the start, and I think there's got to be sort of interventions throughout the year... such as staff trainings and staff development throughout the year. And I think that everybody's got to know what's coming up and what the purpose of it is... and how they can measure the results of the changes they have noticed... and provide feedback to the team for continual growth (Participant 1).

Another participant articulated that training is equally significant for leadership as it is for staff members. Training for leadership will help with the discretion of when it is appropriate to use low-level responses, such as restorative chats and circles, or high-level responses, such as conferencing. "Competence" and "confidence" was noted as being the outcome of trainings, which are strengths that can result from a three-day training of RP.

So I think there's got to be a continuing of practice so that there are basic training for everyone and there's got to be training for middle and senior management to deal with more complex issues. Not everybody needs to

facilitate a formal restorative conference for example, but everyone needs to be able to conduct a restorative dialogue with a student or between a couple of students. Now the problem is that some people take to this like a duck to water and other people are very reluctant... and they think the sky is going to fall in... so for me it's about high quality learning, but also it's about building competence... competence and confidence. The three day training will give everyone the capacity, not the competence for the confidence, but the capacity to facilitate a full, formal, restorative process. It will also mean that they are capable of doing informal ones and small group type things... like a group of girls that had a falling out, or a group of boys that might be bullying another boy, or something... so it doesn't always have to involve parents. But it's also understanding to become unconsciously competent at this stuff requires focus and practice... and you just have to keep doing it... and it's going to work best if you got good collegial relationships where I can say to a colleague of mine that might be sitting in the next desk, "I'm going to have to talk to this kid student for a minute." "Can I get you to sit in and give me some feedback about how the conversation went?" That sort of deep level, but safe sharing, which is what should be happening professionally anyway, when people are watching other people teach... so there are layers of training... so for example in the typical restorative school, every middle and senior manager should be able to facilitate a conference, even though it might

not be something that's in their role description... they should be able to do it. Every teacher should be able to manage the school stuff, so that they don't send it to someone else to deal with. You know my job is to kill my own snakes in my own classroom... and when I run out of confidence, or if the matter is too complex then I would go to someone further up the chain and ask for help with this child. So, there are layers of training. There's advanced training. There's training I do with people who supervise this with other people so that they can manage conflict on their own teams. And the other sort of training I think that matches this perfectly is the business about how to run a decent circle... the preventative stuff... where you build community, where you build social and emotional competence. So I reckon you need both things (Participant 12).

Participant 12 emphasized the significance of ongoing professional development and training of RP, as the training provides the support necessary to keep the fidelity of the program intact, as the RP program is a lifelong commitment and process that requires ongoing support. There seem to be layers of training that can support all staff from subordinates to leaders.

There's got to be a willingness to engage in long-term change. There's got to be sufficient leadership. There's got to be sufficient funding. There has to be people who understand the change management process and how complex it is (Participant 12).

Training Barriers

Another participant reported the significance of proper training and stressed that when people are not trained properly it can create more harm and have a negative impact.

When people are not trained properly it can impede the process. People need to have ongoing professional development all the time... Because if the person doesn't use it properly, then it's going to fail... It's almost like a template. You can read the questions and you use the questions... I've got a little booklet and bookmarks and things like that for teachers, and little cards... and if they don't use them properly, and they go out and try it, then oftentimes they'll say, well it didn't work. So we've got to move beyond that so that they are using it properly... that is the limit. I suppose that the limits of the person that is using it, and if they're really able to use it with confidence, then we'll have positive outcomes. So it's limited by the skill set of the person using it (Participant 6).

The responses on training bring to light the significance for successful RP implementation. The training must involve the whole school, as RP is a whole school initiative. What limits the implementation process is the willingness to participate and buy-in to the change process. RP requires that everyone at the school site recognizes and accepts that it is a lifelong commitment and therefore, requires ongoing professional development. If a school is only training part of its staff, the likelihood of successful implementation is minimized. Positive

outcomes with this approach require “competence” and “confidence,” which is attained through proper training. Without the training, there are limits to this approach, and respondents stressed that success is therefore, unlikely.

Preparation is Key

What makes RP effective in schools is the willingness of people to participate and this also involves care and preparation. Preparation was noted as highly significant for RP to be effective and have successful outcomes.

There are two things here and they are quite different. What makes it possible and what makes it effective... these are quite different, because it can be possible, but it might be ineffective. So, what makes it effective is people's willingness to engage. What makes it effective is the care and the scale and the preparation and the leader of any application of any restorative activity. The effectiveness of that activity rests heavily on the preparation that has been done. If you are going to have a restorative circle for example, you need to prepare everybody that is going to be a part of that circle before they get in the room. There needs to be conversations with each one, around what the circle is going to be like, what contribution they're going to make, what they are being asked of, what skills or qualities they are going to bring within that space, and so on. There needs to be a lot of preparation. So whether it's the dean or the counselor or another pastoral care team member, or whatever group is involving a restorative process, there needs to be some very careful

preparation. So what is it that we're doing... why are we doing it... what is it going to ask of you... how do you need to be in that space? These are some of the considerations and questions to be clearly and carefully attended to in that preparation phase. I'm thinking about things like, for a restorative conference to work, people need to be open. They need to be open hearted... they need to be willing to hear... they need to be able to get outside of their own experience, or their own perspective to hear another's perspective that might be quite different to theirs... without that... if somebody comes in closed off... that can actually be quite harmful. So there needs to be that openness and willingness. If someone is shut down and not wanting to talk, it's not going to be effective. They need to be willing to engage. So for some folks, the work needs to be helping them get over their sense of blame, or guilt, or shame, because that brings defensiveness and closes people off. It brings an attitude of having to explain, or justify, or rationalize what they've been doing, or their position. There is no openness when they do that... so there might be quite a bit of work with somebody who has harmed someone else. There might be quite a bit of work that needs to be done with that person. They need to come to that space open-hearted... not defensive... not with the energy of having to justify, or rationalize or explain, or feel shut down by shame and guilt... and just have their head down and having all these people tell them how bad they are... that's not engaging... that's not

effective... that's not going to encourage them to be reflexive around what effects their behaviors had on these people. I'm not going to be open to that. I'm just going to feel really bad..."I'm a failure, I'm a bad person." So that's the prep work. If the "offender" is unwilling to participate and heal the harm, then there are consequences for their behavior. So in our school for example, the goal is to provide a safe environment. So if the student is unwilling to participate in a restorative process, there are consequences (Participant 3).

The speaker here emphasized the significance of preparation for an RP process to have a successful outcome. The point made here is that if someone participates in an RP process unwillingly and is not adequately prepared, that the outcome will not be effective. There was also a significant emphasis on preparation for the offender and the willingness to engage. Without the willingness to participate and engage, and without careful preparation, RP will likely not be effective.

Another participant stressed that RP is effective because it helps youth understand the impact of their actions. Furthermore, the respondent pointed out that talking with students in a restorative way enables understanding for the student and facilitator that may not have happened with any other approach. When the core problem is identified through RP conversations, facilitators can then help the student develop a plan that will move them forward.

It's effective because the students are hearing how other people are harmed that they really haven't considered... I was speaking this morning to someone who is about to go through a restorative meeting because of a theft that happened, and she could identify some people she has harmed to her actions, but nowhere near the wide circle of people that might have been harmed. And so I think that particular meeting will be quite enlightening for her to recognize the wider impact of her actions. But I just think the whole concept at a really low level is very beneficial for teachers in developing good relationships with the students in better understanding. So talking to students in a different way allows me to know them better and understand what their issues are... such as identifying more things that are getting in their way of attending school, or managing stress, or having good relationships with their friends... that I can help them find a way forward (Participant 11).

Storytelling is Better than Data

One participant reported that RP effectiveness requires participation and one expression of participation is through storytelling.

I think through storytelling. We need to find ways you tell our stories. Storytelling is about participation... You need to find ways to tell stories about restorative practices effectiveness. I think this could be even better than data (Participant 1).

Restorative Practices from a Youth Justice Lens

Again, preparation was noted as being a very important part of the process for successful RP implementation and outcomes. The next speaker reported that young victims are a “wildcard,” meaning that they bring unique outcomes to the RP process with their knowledge and experiences, but careful preparation is essential for this group, as expectations of outcomes can potentially make matters worse. The next speaker emphasized the significance of preparation from a youth justice lens.

I think you have to have somebody that is prepared to do some really good preparation... victim preparation... I mean victims in youth justice are in need of restorative settings... victims are their own people, they bring their own issues to the table... they bring their own education and knowledge of adolescent behavior or development... so they're are bit of a wildcard... So you have got to do a lot of preparation with victims to make sure that they understand what it is that they can expect from this process... because there's nothing worse than coming to the conference and being disappointed by the outcome or being thrown totally off-track. So the facilitator has to know what to draw attention to and what to minimize... People need to be aware at this stage... this is what we can expect of this person. So understanding the challenges the person is facing is critical for successful outcomes. We can't just throw people into a room and expect them to resolve their differences. There are great

disparities involved around that... so preparation is critical... you must prepare people for that meeting. It's about capturing the gold when it happens. Sometimes it may just be a nugget and it gets thrown in there, and if you don't pick it up, or the timing isn't right... or, this is what we're here for... and you can allow silence, which is very powerful in a conference... allow people to really sit with the problem. It can be very task-oriented sometimes... and like I said before, the process is subject to capture from other people's agendas and what somebody wants... and so you have to allow the time, the space, the energy in the room, the right people in the room. For Maori, you have to be very careful about taking an individualistic stance... we talked earlier about how the US is a very individualistic society... you can't do that with Maori people. You won't get the respect and you won't get the process. You have to talk with the family and the family decides what needs to happen next... so you have to talk to the right person. There is a lot of politics involved. So you have to be sophisticated in your approach. It doesn't just happen naturally... you have to understand the dynamics, and there are dynamics in every situation. You have to see the quiet one in the corner and you need to provide the space for them (Participant 7).

Participant 7 stressed the significance of preparation for an RP process to be successful and emphasized that the preparation piece is key to addressing disparities with understanding the challenges the person is facing before they

become involved in an RP process. Moreover, the speaker stressed that a facilitator must also be well prepared to work with youth in an RP process, especially with Maori youth, as this group of individuals would not respond well to an “individualistic” approach.

Participation through Storytelling

One participant reported that RP effectiveness requires participation and one expression of participation is through storytelling.

I think through storytelling. We need to find ways you tell our stories.

Storytelling is about participation... You need to find ways to tell stories about restorative practices effectiveness. I think this could be even better than data (Participant 1).

How Students Respond to Restorative Practices

The next speaker emphasized that students respond favorably to RP and are essentially grateful to have people care about them and their education.

Most of the students have been positive. Like some of the circles we've done, the students have been quite grateful that they have that time to talk with the other students and to do it in a way that's a bit more controlled... with adults in the room, rather than trying to sort it out on their own (Participant 10).

It seems that what students like about RP is the support from adults they receive while trying to work out their problems. Additionally, students appreciate having adults in the room while working out their issues with other students.

Restorative Practices is not a Soft Option

The next speaker emphasized that some students prefer punishment, rather than going through an RP process, and added that the reason for this is because some students find it hard to face their peers and family and take responsibility for their actions.

Whereas if you talk to students who have been involved in a restorative conferences they say, "Look just give me detention, or just suspend me and let's get this over with" or, "This is so hard... or, what you're asking me to do is so hard... taking responsibility and owning up to all of this in front of my peers... in front of my family... just give me detention"

(Participant 4).

Another participant reported that RP slows down the rate of offending and decreases the severity of offenses. While it may not completely eliminate difficult behavior, it reduces the frequency and intensity. Furthermore, the speaker stressed that some students have a tendency to commit violent acts at school, and although conferencing would be the high level response to such behavior, one conference may not be enough. The observation here is that a student who continues to reoffend must go through the RP process each time until the behavior stops. The point made here is that the RP process is hard, so students prefer the easy way out.

One of the things in Australia... what I found out with the use of conferencing in youth justice matters, was that it did two things; it slowed

the rate of reoffending... so the space in between offenses got longer and longer and also the seriousness of the offense was less. So while it may not have totally eliminated difficult behavior is reduced the frequency and the intensity. And so when you think about that and how that might translate into a school... you have kids who are extraordinarily volatile and do dreadful things... and for these kids, one conference may never be sufficient to eliminate the problem. Every time they do something awful to someone else, they've got to face the music until they get it... that they've got to stop doing it. There are misconceptions about restorative practices... that it's a slap on the wrist, and that we all sit around and hum Kumbaya... and have a cup of tea... and say sorry... and that's it... but that's not it at all. It's the process actually that is very punishing... it's punishing for people to go through the process. Kids would rather stand up to a court of law with their lawyer so that the lawyer can speak to them, rather than face the people they did this something wrong to (Participant 12).

There appear to be misconceptions in terms of perception of RP being a soft option and punitive responses teaching students a lesson, so that they do not repeat the behavior. According to the responses from the participants, the RP process seems to be the tougher option that minimizes the possibility of reoffending.

The next speaker supported the notion that there are misconceptions about RP being a soft option and stressed that a majority of the community still believes this.

There is still a lot of community perception out there that this is a “slap on the wrist with the wet bus ticket,” which is a New Zealand phrase. That it’s an easy option (Participant 4).

The responses from participants indicate that some students like the RP process, while others prefer the punishment. The mixed responses may be due to whether or not the student who prefers the punishment is the one who committed a harmful act, while the students who appreciate the RP process may be the ones who have been harmed.

Restorative Practices is not a Panacea or Quick Fix

Several participants stressed that RP is not a quick fix or a panacea. It seems that the RP process is something that schools need to commit to as a lifelong change process that requires ongoing learning for all stakeholders. However, the participants also reported that although it takes an ample amount of time for a school to reach full implementation, the data seems to show that having patience with this process is necessary, but the time that it takes to reach full implementation is worth it.

It's not a quick fix. It's not a silver bullet. It takes quite a long time... It takes a while to grow this... but the investment for the future is way more valuable than the time it actually takes (Participant 2).

Participant 9 reported that when people do not have patience with the RP process and expect quick results, that it becomes problematic with implementation and will likely result in failure.

Implementation breaks down because it isn't a quick fix... people give it a certain amount of time and then say, "See it doesn't work!" (Participant 9).

Participant 3 added that if schools are looking for a quick fix or a panacea to address problematic issues that arise in schools, RP is not the solution. The speaker emphasized that the conditions required for successful implementation is the "valuing of long-term solutions." The speaker seems to be stressing that stakeholders need to fully understand what RP is about and must also realize that everything about RP takes time and requires work. However, if the process is seen as valuable, important, and contributing to better outcomes for students and schools, then successful implementation is more likely.

It's got to be seen as valuable... It's got to be seen as important... It's got to be seen to be making a difference... and until you've done it, you cannot really see it, so there's got to be some explanation as to what this can do that hasn't already been done. And there really has to be some understanding of the shift from one position to another position and how that can be made... and what can happen once that step has been made. So there's a lot of leading, there's a lot of scaffolding... the conditions necessary would be valuing of long-term solutions. If we want a quick fix this won't work... so like I said earlier... if something went down in the

morning and we want it worked out and resolved by the end of the day, restorative practices are not going to be the solution. So the conditions that would make it work is valuing a long-term solution and valuing the care that it takes for that to happen... so valuing the process by saying, “this is really important” and seeing it as contributing significantly to what we’re about at school. What are you prioritizing here in terms of respect and regard and compassion and those type of qualities? (Participant 3).

Participant 9 used the metaphor “unicycle” to describe what it is like to experiment with RP. The speaker stressed that learning how to ride a unicycle is very similar to learning the RP process. It is nearly impossible for a human to get on a unicycle for the first time and successfully ride it... it takes practice. However, sometimes people will give up on the first attempt because they failed and it is too hard. Furthermore, the speaker reported that it is not a “magic wand” or “panacea” and it takes a significant amount of time to become an RP expert. Another point made by the participant was that RP is not a compliance model. The purpose of the process is not to get students to comply. It is a long-term process that fosters “lifelong well-being.”

If you don’t have enough people trying this stuff out, then you’ve got a whole lot of unicycles sitting around... also if people have a negative experience, they have this over inflated sense that a restorative process will fix everything... and it’s not a magic wand... it’s not a panacea... and if there’s not this happily ever after people get discouraged. The reality is

that people might not be friends again... people might not be happy... so again this sense that they won't do it again is unrealistic sometimes. So I think there is a lot to work with that... and I think people are becoming more aware of that and are expecting it to happen because it's part of the change process and there's a response for that... not defensive... just kind of like, yeah it does work the first time. For example, a student might be wearing the correct shoes every day, but they may not be feeling any better... so again, we have this compliance model and we have this over emphasis on compliance as the evidence in change, rather than a sense of self or a sense of connection with community and all that stuff that invisible stuff that matters lifelong well-being... So there's this model of restorative creating compliance, and that's a tricky one, because I think that a school might think it will become... "Ah, so that's how we get students to comply"... and that's a problem (Participant 9).

Restorative Practice is Lifelong -Whole School Approach

Participant 12 emphasized that RP is a whole school approach that is an ongoing journey. The speaker further reported that this is a whole school approach that requires everyone working at a school site to be involved. Additionally, the speaker noted that there are schools in New Zealand that call themselves restorative, but to be a restorative school, the entire school must be participating in RP problem solving and the implementation should be ongoing. Furthermore, the speaker stressed that a commitment to RP implementation is

similar to being married. It needs constant nurturing and work to stay strong and continue growing. If the commitment for RP is absent at a school, then RP will most likely fail.

Well mostly... it's the lack of understanding that this is an ongoing journey. And if you want a whole school approach you don't just train half a dozen people in a school... you need everyone trained to some degree or another... these are big things... otherwise you just end up with isolated pockets of restorative practice and nothing joined up into a whole. There's a whole range of schools in New Zealand that think they're restorative and they're not... because people might have been trained five years ago and they still call themselves restorative, but if they have a warrant of fitness, they would not pass the test, because there is no evidence that there is actually this kind of problem-solving happening just because people were trying it six years ago. This is what I mean about... it's got to be a commitment like marriage... it continues to need attention. If you don't give it the attention, the practice will fall asleep and it will slip back to other stuff (Participant 12).

Barriers

Time

Time was reported as being the most significant barrier to successful RP implementation. Participant 8 added that RP requires a creative mind in

repairing harm and healing relationships, but thinking outside the box can lead to positive outcomes.

It takes time. You need to be prepared to think outside the box of what the needs and the deeds are. You can have some things that you could think of that may be way off base, but it will stop a person from offending. So perhaps the plan provided some structure, or person skills that helped reintegrate him back into the community... so you need to be prepared to think outside the box... not about being prescriptive. For example, this person is going to do some community work, and is going to give an apology, or pay reparation, well that might not be appropriate. So you need to be prepared to have a lot of imagination about what you're doing (Participant 8).

Another speaker also suggested that RP takes time, and that schools working with RP must be able to be imaginative, as there does not seem to be a prescriptive way to deal with problems. Every situation poses unique problems that require unique solutions.

One of the most significant barriers of RP that frequently emerged in participants' responses was the issue of time. Time was reported as being particularly problematic for the movement of RP in schools because punitive approaches are known as a quick fix to addressing problematic behaviors and the RP approach is not. As such, it takes time to shift the mindset of punitive discourses, which was reported by several participants as being an impossible

task. Participant 4 stressed that discourses take generations to change, and as such, patience must be instilled in those who are advocating for this movement. It seems that the participant here is underscoring how notions on punishment can be so deeply embedded in discourses that people have a difficult time changing them. Therefore, the philosophical underpinnings of RP will take time for people to accept as the most useful and valuable way to transform school culture.

At a societal level, and at that grassroots level... things take a long time to change. It takes generations to change. Discourses take generations to change. I still get parents telling me that we're letting kids off the hook, like the RP response is just a slap on the wrist. They say things like, "I want that kid suspended or expelled," or, "I want justice." It's like... "Hang on a minute, how is suspending or expelling justice?" So mentality... particularly for parents whose child has been harmed, they come at it fighting and they may want blood. Retaliation and retribution is what they are seeking... it is still quite a strong current. But it's changing and it's softening... like, there's a beautiful story in New Zealand at the moment where a group of 17-year-old and 19-year-old young women were in a car accident and one person died. The family of the person that died didn't want the driver to be punished. They felt that this person had been punished enough. So, what moves a family to that place where they are not wanting blood, such as "You killed our daughter and we want you to pay for it"... or something like that? There is a different mentality here...

caring, compassion, or knowing that it's not going to bring their daughter back, you know? There's no benefit in throwing the book at this girl. Society is changing... where it might not be useful is when people are caught up in that mentality about wanting retribution and blood, for example. In that case, preparation is really important. But if they are not interested in coming to the table, RP is not a good way to go. It can also be time intensive. It takes ten minutes or less to suspend somebody. You pull together the relevant documentation, you have a meeting with the board... so there's some processes there, but it's not very time intensive. It's one person getting the information. Then it goes to the board to make a decision and that's it. Restorative processes on the other hand, takes a lot of time. You have to find out who all the key players are, you've got to meet with every one of them and have conversations with them individually to hear their story. You need to prepare them all and lay the groundwork for them, and then you need to facilitate it... and then there is the follow-up and a lot of work after that (Participant 4).

Participant 4 reported that time can be particularly problematic for RP for two reasons; 1) RP shifts the mindset of individuals and the way they see punishment, and 2) It takes time to prepare individuals for an RP process, which is the preparation piece noted by respondents as being significant for successful outcomes.

Several participants emphasized that restorative practices require hard work and are time-consuming. However, they also expressed that more learning occurs through the RP process, as students understand the impact of their actions, which is not something that punitive responses offer.

I think it's got a lot of learning for the students in it, but it's hard work. It's hard work for us, because it obviously takes a bit more time... but I do think there is more learning for the students and understanding what the impact of their actions has been (Participant 11).

The speaker's response indicates that there is an issue with time, which indicates that there may be discourses around the issue of time in schools for RP implementation.

The next response was from a police officer highlighting the value of the RP approach. However, time was once again highlighted as an issue.

So, restorative practices makes kids understand the consequences of what they're doing and helps them understand empathy, which I think then reduces any incidences of offending. That's where I think it can make a huge difference. But people have to understand it and put the time and effort into it (Participant 8).

This response from a police officer indicates that law enforcement in New Zealand seems to be supportive of the RP approach. The participant emphasized that RP helps students understand empathy, which can greatly reduce the likelihood of student offending. However, the issue of time was again

mentioned as a barrier to successful implementation. It is noteworthy to mention that although several participants emphasized that time can be an issue, it appears to be a worthwhile endeavor for impacting positive school culture and society.

Well, first... I think they are more deeply attracted to the participants, so that once people get involved in this sort of work, I think they'll enjoy it. Secondly, I think they are effective because of the kind of efforts and passion it brings out of people. We need quite strong, kind of championing, of these sorts of ideas for them to be able to go forward, because the taken for granted and the status quo, is so strongly entrenched in kind of punitive and authoritative ways of speaking... sort of monologue ways of speaking, as opposed to dialogue ways of speaking. So I think that part of what makes it work is having champions, such as having the kind of people with passion and skill and interest. And I think that once we make these ideas available, they seem to land well with the majority of people who get caught up in them. In other words, once they get involved with the restorative process, most people like it (Participant 1).

Again, time was noted as a barrier for implementation. Participant 6 reported that after ten years, her school is still not fully restorative and is currently 70% restorative.

It took time... a lot of time. Approximately nine or ten years now since we started. Our school is now about 70% restorative, but I would expect us to be 90% (Participant 6).

Once again time was reported as a barrier to implementation. The speaker here emphasized that preparation is key for successful outcomes with RP.

I think another thing that is really difficult is finding the time to do the preparation that you need to do and that's just the pressure in the secondary schools because of people teaching and different commitments that they have... and so it often feels like the timeframe is actually dragged out of something happening and having that restorative meeting being resolved, but I feel like the preparation that needs to be done is much more important than dealing with something straightaway (Participant 11).

Responsibility and Restorative Practices

Participant 1 stressed that RP is voluntary by nature and not everyone that gets invited to be a part of the process is interested in doing it. Teachers who take a position of authority find it difficult to be a part of an RP process. The speaker further emphasized that RP needs to focus on responsibility on the social environment, rather than solely on an individual, otherwise it is taking an individualistic stance. Furthermore, the speaker noted that a wrongful act occurs in a social context and as such, responsibility needs to be addressed with the

inclusion the social context in which the incident occurred. The point made here was that a student should not be held solely responsible for a wrongful act, because sometimes it is the social environment that caused the wrongful act to occur and not the person.

Firstly, of course, there's the area of involvement... meaning that not everybody who gets invited to be part of it is interested in it. So one of the limits, is that because it has to be voluntary by nature, sometimes people are positioned in ways that make involvement in restorative practices quite difficult. So teachers who take a position of authority find the democratic, or level the playing field process, quite difficult, because it shifts power and has real implications for what happens next... sometimes that's quite difficult for teachers. That's one limit. There's another limit too, which is around the area of responsibility. Restorative practices have been asking, how we might make things right, and invite people to take responsibility for their part in making things right... that they can... and often times, people, it seems to me, appear to have the ability to take that responsibility, but don't actually. So say for example, young people in schools... we make them responsible for things in which they are not entirely responsible for... and thinking now about what it is that causes kids to act in ways that would have harm happen... it isn't always an individual thing. Often times it's a group thing, or an idea's thing, but we don't talk about that stuff. So one of the elements it seems to me for restorative practices is that we

don't individualize responsibility. I think responsibility lies more broadly on us all as a community. As I am saying that, I am thinking that restorative practices actually allow us to have that conversation as a community as well... so it's a practice where we could take up a community responsibility. But I have seen restorative conferences work where responsibility is focused only on one person. And I really don't like that. I think that responsibility is a broader thing than that. So what I mean by one person is... So let's say that somebody hit somebody; the person who does the hitting, could be deemed to be responsible for that act, but, if you look more broadly at somebody hitting somebody else, they do that within a social context, where hitting is deemed to be the right response for the person at that moment... And so in some ways, their hitting is just kind of an expression of... "the way we do things around here." And unless that stuff gets addressed as well... such as the person who does the hitting is responsible for the hitting, but within the context of them being trained by us... such as, "this is the right way to do things." So unless we take up a social responsibility for the conditions which gave rise to the hitting in the first place, we've put responsibility entirely on the person, and it is actually much broader than that... So I think restorative practices needs to go there as well (Participant 1).

Teacher Resistance

Teacher burn out was reported as being particularly problematic for RP implementation, as they are being asked to add one more duty to their already filled daily agenda. The speaker here stressed that teacher burn out needs to be addressed for successful outcomes of RP.

So teacher burnout is a problem... most of our schools have a student behavior management system, which allows teachers to record when they've had a run-in with particular students, but teachers are not the best at recording things because it takes time to write (Participant 2).

The next speaker reported that teachers already have a full plate of expectations and duties to fulfill. The emphasis made here was that one of the primary reasons teachers are resistant to RP work is because they are tired and their list of expectations and duties are too long.

Teachers are tired... there are just so many things to do... they feel that it's just another thing they've got to do and another expectation from the principal about how they've got to be. I think that's probably where the main resistance comes from. A sense of weariness from a lot of teachers about how huge the task of teaching is, and how they feel that it's just something extra for them to do (Participant 2).

Changing Culture Takes Time

Participant 12 reported that RP changes culture and changing culture takes a significant amount of time. The speaker added that for small schools it

might take about three years, but for larger schools, it can take from five to ten years to fully implement RP.

I think that it is important to understand that it's a cultural change process... that it takes a long time... that it needs absolute support. I think the business is about British schools, Australian schools, New Zealand schools and possibly Canadian schools, is that we do have that layer of middle management that helps spread this kind of work. What needs to be understood is that in small schools, it might take about three years to get up and running but a bigger school, anywhere between five to ten years... so it's long haul stuff. It's not to be sneezed at (Participant 12).

Participant 3 reported that any pockets of resistance or misunderstandings of RP are barriers to successful implementation. Furthermore, the notion of time was once again reported as a significant barrier. The speaker stressed that it can take up to five years or more to fully implement. The speaker further noted that RP implementation requires a significant amount of time and patience and stressed that it "can take a generation to change the culture of a school."

Buy-in... from the school... any pockets of resistance or misunderstanding can be a barrier... and time. Schools are manic places... they are very hectic and manic places and we are asking people to do something more. It's also having patience and not rushing, not pushing staff... the timeframe could be five years. Every five years there's a new generation of students. And it can take a generation to change discourses. To change

the culture of the school it can take a generation. So we have a look at... that's the other thing, the horizon, that timeframe. It's got to be five years or more. It's not a short-term thing. We're not going to do this in a couple of years... it's a five-year project. So that can be a limitation... having a vision and holding steady. If you have a change of leadership or people get disappointed or it's not happening, they give up on it... so holding steady to the plan (Participant 3).

Resistance

The next speaker reported that resistance is particularly problematic for implementation and emphasized that a group of resistant people can impede implementation, because RP voices tend to get "drowned out." Furthermore, the speaker suggested that schools embed the expectations of RP work in teacher appraisals to help minimize any resistance. Then if teachers do not fulfill the expectations of the school, they risk losing their jobs. The point here is that whole school buy-in and consistency is key to becoming a fully restorative school.

Probably what I've said so far in terms of individual staff being resistant, or when you have a whole department that are kind of locked down on their own practices... so if you have the whole department or whole area of the school that shuts it out, then that area is really anti-restorative... so you end up with some negativity, even if it's not very rational... or even if you have a loud voice in there that's kind of positive, it gets drowned out...

what I have suggested is that in time, you work it into teacher appraisal, and that becomes an expectation and becomes part of you... so if you want to work in the school, this is how you will act professionally. These are the processes that we expect you to engage in. These are the practices that we expect from you. So if you're not showing evidence of that, then you can't work here. It may not fit for some people and that's fine, but this is what we are expecting, so we need this kind of strong leadership. It really starts breaking down if you have departments that are fragmented or are inconsistent with their practices ... we have had inconsistent practices across our school. We worked really hard to develop some consistency and have those professional conversations so that the consistency will continue...we just need to get on the unicycle and keep trying it until we get it right (Participant 9).

The metaphor of a "unicycle" was prominent again to describe the implementation of RP. The speaker stressed that consistency is key to successful implementation. Again the suggestion was made that RP schools should embed RP expectations into the performance appraisals to help minimize resistance from staff.

Well, you always have resistance from a number of people on the staff... You have that continuum. You have the people that are doing it all and then you have the middle ground people who will do it... and then you'll have a small group that will resist it... Those resistant people are going to

have to give up the resistance at some stage, because it will go against their performance appraisal... and if they don't get a good performance appraisal, then they will have to do certain things that will show evidence that they have done some RP work (Participant 6).

The next speaker stressed that resistance is particularly problematic for successful RP implementation and shared a vision that as it becomes “the way we do things at this school,” people will be left behind if they are resistant.

I've got some Deans who are really on board, but there is still some more work to do with others. There are some classroom practitioners who remain very resistant because all they hear is there's more work to do and that they are required to take on something more, so they are not interested. But, as it becomes “the way we do things at this school,” people will get left behind if they don't come on board, so they'll come on board, otherwise they'll get left behind. So there's still more work to do there (Participant 3).

The speaker stressed that there will always be a percentage of resistance from teachers but added that the leader of the school drives the process and staff, students, parents, family, and the community must be on board for the implementation process to be successful.

Individual classroom practitioners can be stubborn... they can be very resistant to change. I've got them in our staff... every school has... you've got a corner in the staffroom that will just complain and grumble, and all

they see is “more work.” “You’re asking me to do something new... do something different... do something else.” “All I’m hearing is more work, more work, more work... to hell with that. I’m not doing more work.”...

There will always be a portion of staff that experience new ideas or initiatives, but for anything to happen in the school, the top leadership has got to be driving it and the grassroots has got to be driving it, has got to want it. And in a school you’ve got the leadership, the staff, the students, the families, the parents, and the wider community. All of them have to be on board... because if any one of them is not, it’s not going to work (Participant 3).

The speaker suggests here that punitive practices exert a destructive effect on community relationships. They create a void and fail to address needs. By contrast, restorative practices create a different context for relationships in the school community. They encourage people to think about the needs of both the victim and the offender. The speaker emphasizes that if a vision of community can be shared among all stakeholders it amounts to a discursive shift in the different discourses that govern community relationships.

The next speaker noted that RP offers an opportunity to resolve conflict in most situations, including serious offenses that involve murder. The emphasis was placed on using an example of two students who committed serious crimes, who were reintegrated back into school with the support given from RP, and healing took place for the entire school community.

Well I do think that... given the opportunity, conflict can be resolved in most situations. A good example I often use is that in the UK when they had some high-profile murders, there was an uproar around it... it was a horrible, terrible thing... And two boys went on to do prison sentences over there... And in Norway they had a similar thing a couple of years later and instead of all the input being focused on prison for those two young kids, they brought in social workers into the school, and they brought in 25 counselors, and everybody in the whole school was receiving counseling, and those children were never removed from school, which is unbelievable... but in reality it is saying that although this is a terrible thing, we want these kids to be part of society, we want them to succeed. But actually, it's for the greater good ... I mean... this is at a really high level, but I think in schools where there is a transgression, you have a whole community that are applying pressure to the principal, you know... Why is my child not safe? What happened here? But with restorative practices, we actually bring everyone to. I think that schools have the kids for so long... they're so involved in the kid's life... five days a week, six or seven or eight hours a day, and restorative practices just fulfills so many necessities for the kids in terms of their social skills and their learning (Participant 7).

Hierarchical Structures and School Culture

One theme that consistently emerged in the data was the notion of power structures in schools. Participant 9 stressed that there needs to be a shift in institutional power that imposes authoritarian responses to problems that arise in schools. RP's philosophical approach helps shift these power structures by involving community in decision-making processes that impact school climate and culture. This collective action brings people together and these connections help form a firm foundation for school cultures to thrive.

I think that structural and institutional power in schools needs to be shifted... that's the authoritarian... regardless of how good a school thinks it is, kind of doing its educational focus... it keeps separating out this educational pastoral focus, which again is a little problematic. Curriculum is separated out from everything else. Again, there is this reductionist approach to education. So I think that restorative in terms of a philosophical approach first of all shifts and gets back into the sense of community where there's a community of people... in those Maori ideals of ... what's the most important thing... it's people... Things emerge when there are connections with people. Whereas, I think education in schools is particular hierarchical... everything about school is about discipline and control, so I think that restorative ... enables people to be human, because I feel like schools run like machines... so I think it brings a sensitivity to the humanness, emotional and effect of the world... whereas I think currently,

we just have a production line model of life and schools are very much a part of that... we're little mini machines (Participant 9).

The emphasis made here was that traditional hierarchical power structures in educational institutions perpetuate mechanical school cultures where people are viewed as "mini machines," rather than human beings. RP brings out the humanness in people, whereas punitive responses enforce control over others, much like what is modeled in the criminal justice system. The problem with this approach is that it fosters insensitivity, as people are dealt with as machines rather than human beings.

The same speaker stressed that basic emotional needs of humans are met by having connections with others. Furthermore, schools have a unique opportunity to provide students with this need and teach them how to strengthen their connections with others, as they spend a significant amount of time in school. Additionally, the notion that conflict is inevitable was highlighted and students need to learn skills that teach them how to deal with conflict. The speaker suggested that a school community is a perfect place for students to learn these valuable life skills.

Because human beings are human beings... boiling it down to the simple fact that it doesn't matter where you are... a human being is a human being... humans have emotions... humans have emotional needs... we are about connection... we are about community, and RP works because schools are intensive communities and they're really concentrated... I

mean young people spend an enormous amount of time in schools... they are a really intense community... so how can you not have conflict? How can you not have disagreement? And how can you process that if you don't have a good way of sitting with those tensions and try to dissipate that? ... when someone has done something wrong, the idea is to punish them by making them write an apology letter and it's done...there's actually no engagement with the actual person... and sitting with the reality and harm. The reality of hearing someone's story and how it has affected them and being in the moment and being in that energetic space for someone... so we try to teach it through this disconnected... these are the rules.... you know this is wrong because stealing is wrong... or, this is wrong because it's a violation of whatever... but, when you sit in a room and hear someone's story, it's uncomfortable... it's real... and that's what has been sanitized out ... we are working with bringing back this Maori culture in sitting with community (Participant 9).

The speaker stressed the significance of bringing Maori values of community into schools, as these values are now being embraced by Western civilization as effective in fostering connections that are vital. Punitive approaches disconnect people, while RP fosters connections and bonds that can transform school communities.

Individualistic Discourse

Again the notion of individualistic discourse was highlighted as a barrier for successful implementation of RP for the improvement of school culture.

It's a culture thing, and by culture I mean school culture... by and large, people who participate in restorative practices have a renewed view on things. I noticed that some teachers are quite disparaging of restorative practices, because it doesn't appear to hold people responsible for behaviors in the sort of ways that the teachers would like. But, I think this is a Western, individualistic discourse at work there, and I'm not particularly interested in this way of thinking. However, in my experiences, most teachers think very positively about these ideas (Participant 1).

Participant 1 reported that those who participate in RP have a renewed view that can positively impact school culture. Although there is always some resistance, most teachers think positively about it.

The same participant extended thought on individualistic discourses and school culture, which appear to be a barrier for successful implementation of RP in schools. Although New Zealand has experienced enormous success with the RP approach so far, and most schools have embraced the collective involvement it requires, there still seems resistance due to individualistic ideals that are deeply embedded into cultural discourses.

So I think that it's the idea of people collectively addressing harm done within our institutions. To the extent that culture has been shaped by an

individualistic idea, I think that is to the extent towards why they find it difficult to buy into, and I think that we, New Zealanders, find it difficult also. It's been murky in a sense with the Maori and Pacifica and many of our other populations as well, so there's a collective, in a sense, ground there (Participant 1).

Feedback from Restorative Practices Participants

The participants have heard feedback from adults that the RP approach is too soft of a response, particularly within the police context. However, one participant reported that students would prefer the consequences rather than go through an RP process.

I've heard stories... within a police context... I don't like the touchy-feely side... students want to be given the consequences, because it's easier... Some of them that are going on to be career offenders, we know that we are just managing them until they go to jail, unfortunately... we're always going to have that percentage. But ... the feedback that we get from parents is that they actually appreciate the time and efforts that has been spent talking with them, trying to work out the issues (Participant 8).

The speaker recognized the fact that there will always be some resistance, but contradicts the notion that RP is a soft option.

Accountability and Expectations

Participants reported that RP is not a soft option, and added that students prefer suspension rather than going through an RP process, as the RP response

makes the student accountable for the behavior, which is more demanding for the student. However, making the student accountable without blame or shame produces a more positive outcome for school culture, as the likelihood of the student breaking rules again is significantly decreased.

RP is looking at the wrongdoing as impacting relationships rather than breaking a rule. We look at who has been harmed and bring everyone together in the room, those harmed and those responsible for the harm and hold them accountable. That's hard, much harder to do ... than to just "go home for three days"- suspension (Participant 3).

The next speaker also reported high accountability with RP and the notion that RP is a "soft option" was challenged. The claim was that RP is a rigorous process that involves high accountability, high expectations, and high support.

It is highly accountable... it is a highly accountable model. There are high expectations and that sort of thing... it is not a soft option at all. And I think that the more people are exposed to the processes of restorative practice, the more rigorous they realize it really is... and it is. Young people are held accountable... there is high support and high accountability (Participant 6).

Participant 3 and 6 made it clear that RP is not a soft option for students and that making students accountable for their actions is much harder than sending them home and excluding them from school. Furthermore, the value of going through an RP process is more beneficial for the student and the school in

terms of recidivism, as the likelihood of reoffending appears to be higher with suspensions and expulsions than with the RP approach.

Participant 8 reported that teaching people how to be accountable for the impact of their actions is not easy. The speaker further noted that the earlier these lessons are learned, the better it is for students' wellbeing.

RP will reduce incidences and give a better understanding of what they've done and the consequence and how it affects other people... those are hard things to teach people... and the behavior needs to be taught at an early age so that the earlier they learn it, the better it is for the kids (Participant 8).

Fear of Change

Another issue raised by participants for RP implementation is that people fear change. The RP approach has philosophical tenets that produce a cultural shift in the way people view punishment. As such, this approach may potentially face enormous resistance, as shifting one's mindset is not easy.

People are fearful about change, because there is quite a shift in practice, moving from punitive to restorative, so maybe schools need help with changing people's mindsets, or ideas, or ways it can happen (Participant 11).

It seems that expectations relating to the punitive mindset can get in the way and limit successful outcomes of RP processes. Participant 3 expressed that preparation can address misconceptions about RP practices. The emphasis

here was that preparation would help eliminate some of the expectations that get in the way of successful outcomes. Participant 3 further emphasized that New Zealand has come a long way in understanding the power of RP and the influence it can have for social transformation. It is now widely recognized and accepted in New Zealand as the right way to address harm, rather than isolating and punishing individuals for their wrongdoings. New Zealand has recognized that punitive approaches exacerbate problems and create unsafe school cultures and societies. As such, the RP approach has been widely embraced as a valuable approach.

It can be limiting when people are really caught up in the emotion and really invested in particular outcomes, like predetermined... for example, “I want that person to suffer.” I have had some parents that are quite punitively focused and, to be invited to a conference, feels like they are letting the other person “off the hook”... that it is too soft... so that takes a lot of preparation and work. It’s really easy for a kid to sit at home for three days, but it takes a hell of a lot for them to be in a room with around ten other people to talk about the effects of their actions. So, which one is easier... sitting at home watching TV for three days, or being in this room with a facilitator? At the structural level... how widely held is the understanding that restorative approaches have better outcomes than punitive measures? At the structural level... I’m talking about the system, institutions, and the government. In New Zealand, that has taken a long

time. It's been twenty or thirty years of evolution... but now it's kind of become the mainstream means for how things are done. The enthusiasm has grown... it is now seen to be engaging and outcomes are positive... so at the structural level, there is now more belief in it as, "This is the right way." We have come to recognize that putting people in jail does not change them. The best that does is keep societies safe... at its best. The worst incarceration does is when they come out ten years later, they are more hardened and even more alienated from society than ever... and they go on to re-offend, often in escalating ways. Incarceration creates a false sense of security. Putting people in prison and punishing offenders does not change anything... it has never been an effective deterrent, no matter how much we ramp up consequences... it's not effective. What is effective is sitting in a room with the people who have been harmed by one's actions... seeing and experiencing firsthand the fullness of the consequences of those actions... so even in court now they have "victim impact statements" as a mainstream standard practice ... that's standard practice now... It wasn't twenty years ago... Why? Because we know the value of this now... it's bringing the "human" back. It's putting those harmed at the centre of proceedings, and connecting people to the real effects of their actions. People can be hardened, and so angry, and so damaged, and so alienated and so... whatever closes off their heart is

closed off... Restorative Practices re-focus things on people's real experiences and relationships (Participant 3).

Participant 3 stressed that RP has been widely accepted in New Zealand as a useful alternative to punishment. There appears to be a movement in New Zealand of RP that is gaining momentum and is now being seen as a valuable tool to address inevitable problematic issues that arise in schools. Furthermore, New Zealand has widely agreed that locking up individuals is not serving as a deterrent to crime, and may be perpetuating the contribution to creating unsafe societies. Similarly, pushing students out of classrooms and schools and denying them a rightful education and positioning them on the school-to-prison pipeline, is not creating safer school climates.

Restorative Practices in New Zealand vs United States

Participants also made some comparisons between New Zealand and the United States in their comments about RP.

United States is a big complex country. It's much bigger than ours, with much more complexity. We have only been going for 160 years... you've been going for twice that long. With increasing complexity, that's where you've got people coming here that don't necessarily agree with this democracy and don't necessarily agree with the notion of a civil society (Participant 5).

United States has different history... the history of slavery must have... You can see if it has an ongoing oppressive effect on the total population now. There was a time when Maori children were being victimized for speaking their own language... so what you've got in this country is a lot of Maori people cannot stand school... and it's not about their experiences but about their grandparent's experience. There is this big resentment about the loss of language and the fact that Maori kids went to school and got beaten by teachers and it's not spoken about very much but it's a legacy that we've got. The latest publishing of mine was about using restorative practice to decolonize or anti-colonize really... So when you think about what you have in the States, it's a million times worse (Participant 5).

Power and Authority

Power structures were noted by the participants as particularly problematic for successful RP implementation in schools. The rationale was that successful RP implementation requires whole staff buy-in and training in RP. Furthermore, everyone at the school site should be addressing problem-solving the same way, or students will receive mixed messages.

People of authority make demands or rules that run counter to what you're trying to achieve... so that might be the principal or a person in the hierarchy... If you don't include all the support staff, the lady in the office for example, who is the person who people visit first... That's an issue, or

somebody who's not very kind or has an overbearing attitude... you probably are not going to go very far changing a school (Participant 5).

Again the notion of teacher resistance as a barrier was once again noted as particularly problematic. If RP is not used properly, or if teachers do not drop their power positions, these can be additional barriers to successful RP implementation.

Teachers can be a barrier and the way that people use it if they use it properly. Everybody experiences that including the teachers and that's why you get these experiences where people try something and never have tried... and the conversation doesn't go the way they expected it to go, it goes to a completely different place and they think, "Oh my goodness," and that totally converts people immediately. It's very simple actually. It's just plainly people are not willing to drop their power position (Participant 5).

It seems that participant 5 is saying that RP expects people in authority positions to let go of their power, which can become particularly problematic if they are not ready to do this.

In New Zealand, at the systems level, it has been really embraced and understood as an effective, long term, cost efficient model... long term. At the school level, societal, and criminal justice level... unfortunately, there have been some constraints around like family law... family courts have lost a bit of ground in this now... so they've gone to a dispute resolution

service model. It's a little more litigious than what we've had a few years ago. We've lost some major policies that had supported disputing couples to come together in a restorative context. We are now going back to a legal, litigious context, in my opinion... and that's about money. The system will pay a lawyer for a couple of sessions, because it's more cost-effective than a therapist for ten sessions... so I think that, there is that neo-liberalism influence in social policy and funding priorities. There is a growing emphasis on "evidence-based empirical evidence" to prove and demonstrate the effectiveness or the efficacy of this process. So I think those are some other threats to restorative practices, because with those come budgets. So neo liberalism mindset and practices... at a government level, a structural level, they want "cost efficiency", effectiveness... they want short-term outcomes, evidence based... they want proof, statistics, outcomes, and product. And those are guiding budget allocations, which has impact at the community level in regard to which organizations are funded and which are not. We have recently lost several... three or four, major national service organizations because the government policies and priorities have pulled the funding... and I think that is going backwards (Participant 3).

Outcomes Discourse

Participant 3 reported that the punitive mindset is problematic for successful implementation in schools because the RP process does not seem

“consequential” enough to an individual who thinks that the punitive approach is the only way to address problematic issues that arise in schools. The “quick outcomes” discourse was noted as a barrier, because individuals with a punitive mindset look at the “quick outcomes” as consequential enough.

The barriers are time efficiency, costs, quick outcomes... all of that... and... “outcome orientation” and the discourses around what are outcomes that are adequate... so that’s the retribution and retaliation mindset... sitting in a conference, having dialogue with some kind of plan about how to restore or repair and make amends, or whatever... may not seem “consequential” enough, as somebody doing jail time or being fined thousands of dollars or being expelled from school or whatever... so it’s about “outcomes” that are seen as consequential enough (Participant 3).

Teachers are a Barrier to Restorative Practices Progress

Teachers can also be resistant, because they have a punitive mindset that is difficult to change. However, teachers feeling “overworked,” was noted as the “biggest threat in New Zealand schools.”

Well most definitely in schools, one of the threats is that there are teachers who still see those punitive responses as being the most effective way, so when something is done wrong, they see that as breaking some rule or some law in the school and therefore it must be punished... regardless of anything that surrounded that in terms of the students or what’s going on in the student’s life. That’s the real threat,

because there are still unfortunately significant numbers of teachers who think that way. And then it comes down to their experiences I guess of dealing with crisis... dealing with their own authority... being challenged... and how they manage that. I also think it's also a response to teachers feeling overworked and to work restoratively does take more investment and more commitment and we have teachers who are not to be able to do that... this is one of the biggest threats in New Zealand schools (Participant 4).

Impact on Society: A Vision for Societal Transformation

Schools Shape Society

The emphasis on the amount of time spent at school was noted, which creates opportunities for students to learn valuable life skills. Participants expressed that the purpose of education is to help students succeed and become productive citizens. Schools have a unique opportunity to transform and shape society by maximizing student potential with inclusive practices, rather than excluding them from learning, which is counterproductive for school culture and society. It is noteworthy to mention that RP not only benefits the student, but also benefits the entire school community, which can potentially benefit society as well.

A Vision for the Future

When participants were asked why they think RP is important for schools, here is how they responded.

Well, I think it's really important for schools because schools in many ways are the bedrock of how we go about doing ourselves as a society, and if we could make the taken-for-granted response to trouble, one of sitting down and working things out and can figure out how to make things right, then we have the potential to influence our broader community towards that direction. I think that punitive responses are less helpful than a community gathering to try and make things right (Participant 1).

Participants reported that punitive responses are less helpful than RP and emphasized that RP is important for schools, because it is where people learn how to be in society. When people learn how to deal with conflict in a constructive way and how to have positive relationships with others, society will benefit as a whole.

Building Just and Equitable Societies

Several participants said that RP helps transform societies to be more just and equitable. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that elements of a more just and equitable society is a more educated population, which enables options to contribute to society. Participant 4 stressed that educated people make better choices and RP serves as a catalyst for this to happen.

This is about building just and equitable societies. One of the elements of a just and equitable society is that you have an educated population. And the reason we want an educated population is so that people will have the ability to make reasoned choices and have options that contribute to society. Unless we can keep kids in schools engaged and participating, we're not going to have educated populations. Restorative justice is a way of doing that (Participant 4).

The next speaker reported that RP is a “vehicle” for fostering ethical and just societies, but expressed that this may be a far-reaching endeavor, as societal transformation must first begin in our schools. Furthermore, the participant stressed that RP is now being called a “movement,” but in order to gain momentum, there must be dialogue with community members to gain a better understanding as to how to move RP beyond the school gates.

I think there probably needs to be more work done around how we get that message beyond the school ground. Some of the early work, such as some of the work that is done here at the University of Waikato, around restorative practice talked about it being a vehicle for creating just and ethical societies ... However, I don't think we are easily going to meet the criteria, because it's very much focused on inside the school gate. We talk with schools about how do they go outside the school gate and follow families into that conversation but if this really is a movement that creates just and ethical societies, then I think there needs to be work around how

do we move this model of what happens in schools beyond to involve community to be part of the dialogue. I don't think we understand enough about that at the moment. And I don't think we really understand enough about how to engage with those people who see punitive as the just thing to do (Participant 4).

Participant four stressed that involving community in RP in schools may be challenge. However, the observation here is that in order to move RP beyond the school, community involvement is necessary. RP is known to shift school cultures, which then can transcend to society. However, involving community in the part of the dialogue can provide more support for the RP movement.

When participants were asked about their vision for the future of RP, here is how some of them responded. Again the emphasis was made on involving as many people as possible in the RP dialogue, so that healing can take place anywhere, at any time, in any setting, addressing a myriad of problems known to weaken relationships and social structures.

Well, my vision is aligned with what is happening at the moment. We're going through some major, significant structural changes to families... and one of the biggest changes is the recognition that these doors that we knock on... education, drug and alcohol issues... that they are all responsive to RP. We try to create a space where everybody sits in and everybody acknowledges responsibility. This is what is needed and I'll meet that need. So... My vision is to have an ecological response to

crime or education, or whatever it is ... I want everybody in the tent about making those decisions and deciding who is responsible... So that's restoration for everyone really (Participant 7).

The speaker seems to be hopeful about the future of RP and added that any problems that arise in society can be dealt with using the RP approach. This response emphasizes the power of the RP process and the healing that can result from this approach. Furthermore, the emphasis on ecological response to crime and education indicated that RP has the potential to shift the way society deals with issues that arise inside and outside educational institutions.

The next participant reported that RP helps people become more “relationally intelligent”, which is assumed to benefit society as a whole. The speaker emphasized here that there is a difference between New Zealand and the United States in the way people relate to each other. Furthermore, the participant stressed that New Zealand has traditionally believed in “fairness” and that the political climate and societal values in New Zealand are quite different than in the United States, which was noted Participant 5 by as the reason that RP is being widely accepted by New Zealand schools.

Well I think here in New Zealand, we're trying to teach people how to interact respectfully and if we get that... if we did it successfully, I would hope that we would have a much more relationally intelligent population.

Actually I think I said somewhere in my writing that it's not really an accident that this process has taken off in this country. We have a tradition

of sort of giving people a go... like a sense of fairness and I think that students understand that, and teachers understand that, so the whole idea of getting restorative practices as a baseline in school, is congruent with an understanding that I have, and I think quite a lot of people have here in New Zealand about democracy. Fortunately we don't have the political problems in this country that America has (Participant 5).

Participant 5 suggested that New Zealand is more accepting of RP because it fits well with the values embedded in their society. The speaker also reported that New Zealand and the United States have different political climates, which may potentially be a barrier for RP to move forward in the United States. It is noteworthy that RP appears more effective with a collective approach to program implementation in schools. Participants have highlighted that power political structures and individualistic societies may not be as successful as New Zealand has been with this approach.

Again, the mention of “shared” participation is necessary for the RP movement to continue making progress. Participant 3 stated that RP invites people into a “shared” space to help people move forward and make the world a better place for everyone.

Restorative practices invites people into more of a shared exploration and puts the focus on how we can go forward and to make the world respectful and safe for everybody. I like that (Participant 3).

Visions for the Justice System

A police officer stated that her vision for society is that RP would make such a difference for people that she would be out of a job. This statement indicates that police officers are supportive of RP and believe it can make a difference in society.

My big goal for working with the youth system is that I would actually be out of a job... that we are doing such a fantastic job and holding our kids accountable that I would actually be out of work, because there would be no more youth offenders or crime... and I could be doing prevention and not having to deal with youth offenders. That's my goal... for us to be out of work (Participant 8).

Participant 9 expressed a vision for society that people should be given an opportunity to make things right before they were incarcerated or imprisoned. Furthermore, the speaker emphasized that victims and survivors must also be given the opportunity to meet the person who harmed them face- to-face.

My vision for society is that we will actually start looking at international evidence that points to putting people in prison doesn't work. If you have to incarcerate people, you have to give people opportunities to heal harm... you have to give people who are victims or survivors, opportunities to meet each other face-to-face (Participant 9).

Participant 9 also said RP needs to be more demystified to become the way society communicates and deals with harm. The speaker stressed that the

judicial system is still very much modeled after Western ideals and although New Zealand has made strides with their collective values and beliefs and implementation of RP in schools, there is still more work to be done to change the judicial system away from the punitive model.

I would like to see it demystified a bit more... I would like to see it in a more public conversation... I think right now, it's quite private and it's a niche... or it's still a subordinated practice. It's not a legitimate way of working with the public. I don't think they grasp it all that well yet. So yeah, I would like to see it across communities ultimately. I think certain people do it anyway like the Maori, because that's the way they've always done it... So it's not so much that it's new, it's just kind of making something a process that has been around for very long time valid and accepted... and again that's partly because we are a colonized country and we still think ... that Western ways of doing justice is better... so there needs to be a decolonization of our judicial system (Participant 9).

There seem to be colonization discourses deeply embedded in the New Zealand justice system, which holds onto punitive practices. Participant 9 stressed that indigenous values of the Maori population that were once taken from them during colonization are now being brought back to light as an effective way to build community and strengthen society.

Participation is Key to a Strong Society

The next participant emphasized that building a strong society requires participation of community in issues that impact the justice and education system. The speaker seemed to suggest that community involvement in justice and education is key to building society.

The logic of it just makes so much sense to me... you need to have a functioning society that everybody is part of... you need to build society by weaving people in the fabric of society... and that means being involved in justice and education. We've institutionalized so many things. People expect other people to do things for them and they don't participate and I think the participation is the key to a good strong society (Participant 7).

Whanganui, New Zealand- First Restorative City in the World

Participant 12 reported that New Zealand has recently declared an entire city as fully restorative city. The respondent further noted that this is the first city in the world receiving support from local government for dealing with problematic issues utilizing the RP approach. Having a fully restorative city in New Zealand will help gain legitimacy for the process as it is now being supported by external forces known to influence policy and practice in educational institutions.

Whanganui is a city in New Zealand that has declared an aspiration to be New Zealand's first restorative city. So they have now and there is something that just came out in the paper the last couple of days declared that the kind of practice, what kind of conduct that elected officials, and

counselors as elected officials into local government. The code of practice now states that the standard approach to problem solving will be restorative. So if there are complaints it will be dealt with restoratively. So this is the first local government that I am aware in the entire world that has officially become fully restorative (Participant 12).

Learning Life Skills

Participant 6 shares a vision for society that includes better communication skills for young people, enabling the ability to solve conflict, which was noted as highly significant for social transformation.

We are an educational institution. Young people need to learn skills that will carry them through to adulthood... and the communication skills that go with that are hugely important. The ability to problem-solve and to also solve conflict in a positive way is really important for young people (Participant 6)

Participant 11 reported that the RP process helps foster more learning than suspensions can provide, and added that it improves behavior, which will result in improved societal outcomes.

One would think that if there were more restorative conversations than suspensions, there would be more learning... and that it would change behavior more than if you were to exclude students from school for a couple of days, and the student didn't realize the impact of his actions, because nobody would actually talk to him about it... so I would think that

the people who go through a restorative process would be better citizens in the future, which is going to be make for a nicer society (Participant 11).

Participant 3 reported that there is more learning that occurs with non-punitive approaches to discipline and punishment that can help produce stronger communities and societies and noted that punitive approaches do not offer such possibilities, because people fear consequences and will not openly talk about their problems. Furthermore, the speaker noted that when the RP principles are learned and people realize that it is not about blame or shame, and are about “healing,” “community,” and “connection,” that it enhances the possibilities for a more improved society.

There are alternatives to a punitive approach that have much better learning outcomes and are much more supportive of creating a culture of care and community than punishment and discipline practices do.

Discipline practices can often have the unintended effect of problems going underground (not being disclosed) and not discussed, not coming to light, because people are afraid of retribution or punishment to where restorative process can really support everybody involved. It's not about blame and shame but about healing and community and connection... so it creates a better society (Participant 3).

Participant 3 shared a vision for society involving mediators and ambassadors and said that having these “micro-conversations” can be a “game changer” for RP implementation.

I'm working with the peer educators' project, developing this over the next few years. That means getting an increasing number of students who are trained to be leaders within their own peer group. Part of that role, I envision, is having mediators, and ambassadors for restorative practices... being involved... those micro-conversations that can really be a sort of game changer on the ground level (Participant 3).

Advice from the Restorative Practices Experts

When the participants were asked to give advice for other countries that are interested in RP implementation in schools, here is how they responded.

My advice would be for schools to come on board and see this as a way that they can contribute to citizenship, to cultivating a society that is better for the planet and better for us, better for families, better for young people and that they can create that in their classroom and in their school... there is life beyond punishment and retribution and that's a much healthier, happier and safer holistic place to live (Participant 3).

This response indicates that participant 3 feels very strongly about the impact RP can have for cultivating a better society and improving the lives of citizens around the world. An emphasis was made that RP can produce positive outcomes on many levels of life, far exceeding anything that punitive responses have to offer. The next respondent advised that schools need to experiment with it and after experiencing the outcomes it can produce, people will be convinced that it is a preferred approach.

Just try it. Experiment with it. Give it a go. I think that people will tell you that it is actually what they want (Participant 7).

The next participant advised that other countries should draw from their own indigenous values of healing, which may have been lost through colonization of Western ideologies. The speaker suggested that external political forces have historically shaped education and stressed that some countries are oppressive and not open to embracing indigenous values and curiosity, which will hinder the movement of RP expansion worldwide.

I think going back to their own indigenous cultures and being aware of their own heritages and histories and seeing what was potentially lost... and those traditional cultural shifts. I think it's about understanding the social historical context... even governments... these are countries that have been through extreme trauma and I think locating communities where they are now and probably understanding what values are important that are coming through... whatever governments are trying to bring to their schools. Because I think there are differences around the world... so I think it's a little bit about who is in control of that country... and in terms of education, it's having leaders or having policy makers and governments exposed to these ideas or I think it's a little bit about people being prepared to question how things are currently and who they work for, who's interest is served by working in these ways and if that's impossible to even ask that question in some countries you're not even

allowed to question what is going on... so I guess it's that openness about being able to question... and if you can question, seeking out what questions are you trying to ask and I think getting exposed to some of the basic ideas of, well there are other ways, and these are some countries that are working and these and generating interest. I think it's generating a conversation, generating awareness. I think if you don't have an awareness that other countries can do this, or have done this before, or are still doing it... like indigenous cultures such as the Maori... they probably look at us and say, oh yeah of course this works we've been doing it for years (Participant 9).

The next speaker advised that schools should begin experimenting with lower level RP responses, such as lateness, or minor interpersonal conflict to see the difference it can make.

I would say find out about restorative practices and start targeting some lower level behaviors that you think could be solved in a less punitive way. So for example, lateness to school, being rude to teachers, an argument, or conflict... like an ongoing conflict in the classroom... experience those small little things first and see if it makes a difference (Participant 11).

The next speaker advised that schools need improved relationships with mental health practices and general practitioners, as this will improve the outcomes for students.

There needs to be more relationship between schools and mental health. We have youth who are engaged in mental health services outside of school that we don't know anything about, because it's the family or the general practitioner, or they are going elsewhere and there is no evidence of it at school. I believe that's really dangerous, because if a child has an episode at school or suddenly deteriorates at school, we don't know what's going on... and there have been instances of that. Just recently, a young person was severely cutting and it was only after that incident that we had contact with the parents and found out that there was involvement with psychiatric services, but we didn't know anything about it. So that's really unhelpful. We need to look at better relationships, particularly with mental health (Participant 3).

Restorative Practices is a Lifetime Commitment

Participant 12 advised that word of mouth makes a difference and supports the movement of RP in communities around the world. The speaker further emphasized that schools must realize that RP is not so much a program, as it is a shift in culture.

Sometimes the system will say to a school or a school leader, "Your data is dreadful... do something about it." So it might be they have too many kids who are suspended... or too many kids excluded... so, they might have bad data, or they might have heard from the principal in the school down the road, who says, "Oh my god, we're having such a stunning go at

all of this... so the word of mouth will make a difference. I think it's really about if we want the best educational outcomes for kids, not only do we have to concentrate on the pedagogy aspect of it, but we have to raise our expectations around standards... we've got to raise our expectations around behavior and being tough on punishment... because punishment isn't going to make much of a difference actually. I find when I go into a school, I will ask them what their interest is... what they are thinking... and sometimes I've got really deep answers, and sometimes they are very shallow... either way, I would have them complete a survey to see how ready they are and what their understanding of restorative practices means and what it means for the school. Because a limited understanding... such as, we'll just do it for a year and we'll be ok, will not be effective. It is actually a lifetime job (Participant 12).

Furthermore the participant emphasized that implementation readiness is key to successful outcomes. The more a school is prepared for implementation the more successful the outcomes will be. School leaders must be willing to commit to a major shift in the way punishment is dealt with. Summary

This chapter highlighted the voices from the participants indicating strong opinions about the purpose and significance of RP in schools as an alternative response to punitive disciplinary practices. The participants also voiced insight of the implementation process and offered suggestions for long lasting sustainability of RP. The data indicates that RP is an effective approach for strengthening

relationships, teacher-student relationships, improving classroom climate and culture, and improving school climate and culture. The participants also voiced that schools in large measure shape our society and emphasized that RP transforms schools, which can ultimately change society.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to shed light on an innovative alternative approach to disciplinary practices in schools known as Restorative Practices in New Zealand schools. The aim of this study was to explore the purpose and significance of the RP approach from the lens of experts in the field in various professional settings in Auckland, New Zealand. The hope of this study was to gain valuable insight and knowledge from professionals with numerous years of experience with RP, in order to contribute to the purpose and credibility of RP.

It appears that RP is useful for improving relationships between students, teacher-student relationships and fostering safer and healthier school environments. In addition, the RP approach has the potential to keep students in their classrooms and in school, so that they can continue learning, which may potentially narrow the school-to-prison pipeline gap. Finally, the RP approach appears to have the potential to transform school culture, which may potentially create a more safer and just society for all.

American schools are in need of innovative non-punitive alternatives to help students remain in school and continue learning. This non-punitive approach highlights the development of positive relationships, rather than the traditional punitive methods that can exacerbate problems. Lastly, this study abroad project enhances international appreciation and learning that may not

only benefit American schools, but may also benefit schools in other countries throughout the world.

This chapter highlights the experiences with RP from the perspectives and experiences of twelve experts in the field of RP who have utilized this approach as a preventative and intervention method for addressing problematic issues that arise with youth. Furthermore, this chapter offers a discussion on how this study complements previous research and theoretical perspectives on the topic of RP in schools, and will highlight the implications of the recorded data and interviews with the RP practitioners. Furthermore, there will be a discussion on how the results can inform educational leaders and impact educational transformation. Lastly, recommendations for further research and limitations will be discussed.

The research question that helped guide my research was: “In what ways do experienced practitioners in the field of Restorative Practices in New Zealand make sense of its significance and purpose as an alternative approach to school discipline? The research question was answered by collecting data by recorded interviews taken of twelve participants with numerous years of experience with restorative practices in Auckland, New Zealand.

Summary of the Findings

The following themes emerged from the research study:

- 1) Participants’ claimed that RP attends to relational harm known to breakdown social structures in educational organizations in a

way that heals relationships and helps restore personal agency for individuals.

- 2) Participants argued that RP strengthens relationships, improves classroom cultures and builds social capital.
- 3) Participants identified that RP shifts power imbalances in classrooms.
- 4) Participants described how RP enables voice and agency, which are significant factors for empowering students.
- 5) Participants' showed that RP is a collective approach to restoring relationships and attending to harm rather than an individual approach.
- 6) Participants identified that RP teaches students valuable life skills.
- 7) Participants described how offending will stop or lessen with RP, potentially narrowing the pipeline-to-prison.
- 8) Participants outlined how the value of RP is in the learning process and not the outcome.
- 9) Participants identified that RP significantly decreases suspensions and expulsions—bullying and misbehavior is reduced, and detention practices for minor rule breaking are completely eliminated.

- 10) Participants described a greater focus on teaching and learning in schools committed to RP.
- 11) Participants identified how RP can significantly support vulnerable populations.
- 12) Participants delineated how strategic preparation for RP processes and implementation is key for successful outcomes with RP in schools.
- 13) Participants claimed that leadership buy-in and effective leadership is key to successful RP implementation.
- 14) Participants argued that RP is about valuing long-term solutions.

Discussion

The above conclusions can be brought together and summarized in the following way. RP appears to reposition education significantly. Taken seriously it amounts to a huge revolution that can potentially change the future in education. While participants could mount a case for a significant shift in school culture it also appears that the implications of RP can transcend beyond the school site and serve as a transformative force in society as well. Achieving such a transformative vision will not be produced by a passing fad. Rather, RP needs to be seen as a lifetime commitment.

Existing studies on RP points out that punishment does not work in schools and alternative responses are necessary to decrease suspensions and

expulsions. Furthermore, studies indicate that isolating students and depriving them of an education exacerbates problems. As Valdebenito, et al. (2013) reported, exclusionary punishments have an adverse impact on schools and societies. Participants in this study agreed that punitive approaches are counterintuitive for fostering strong connections with others and impedes opportunities for learning. For example,

I've never seen kids that have been punished get back into school and reconnect with their friends and colleagues in a way that restorative practices have. A punitive approach has quite different energies. I think that a punitive approach creates resistance, denial, blame and avoidance. It also creates fear and blind compliance. It doesn't engage (Participant 3).

Literature pointed out that disciplinary policies such as zero-tolerance once appeared to be a practical solution for keeping schools safe, as Pavelka (2013) noted that punitive practices are not as effective as once perceived. However, the consensus is now that such policies are understood to negatively impact schools and societies. Participants reported that RP shifts power structures known to perpetuate the disciplinary mindset, which have been emphasized in literature as having negative impacts for students, classrooms, educational institutions and societies. Furthermore, literature noted that implementation of educational policies are largely dependent upon power structures, such as federal and state agencies. Participants suggested that the reason RP has been successful in New Zealand is because the government has

bought into the idea and has accepted the RP approach as valuable to transforming schools and society.

Results of this study further supported the literature that pointed to negative implications that result from student exclusions, such as resentment and anger (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013) increased chance of reoffending, and unsafe classroom and school climates. Participants in this study added that the most significant are the negative implications for society. For example,

People aren't going to come forward if there is a punitive environment... they will if there is a restorative ethos... so that would help narrow the learning and achievement gaps. It empowers people and empowers youth to be proactive about the environment and the school community. In terms of prison and so on... the earlier the interventions and the earlier the alternatives are introduced to a young person's life, the better the outcomes are... so if primary schools were to be involved in restorative processes and a young person was to learn how to communicate what they are struggling with, or their frustrations, or whatever, in ways that didn't result in violence or harm, then that could alleviate a lot of suffering in communities (Participant 3).

Literature further suggests confusion about involving all stakeholders (Vaandering, 2011) in the harmful action and whether or not it is acceptable to coerce someone to be a part of the restorative process or whether it should only be voluntary. Participants made it clear here the importance of preparation work

before an RP process takes place and that it will not work if a participant is coerced. Furthermore, the participant must agree to be a part of the process or it will fail.

Significance of Inclusive Environments

Literature on the effects of punitive practices point to the theory that harsh disciplinary practices are pushing students out of school and contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline (Wilson, 2014). Literature further points to alternative responses to punitive practices as making a difference for schools (Mullet, 2014). Restorative Practices are one such approach outlined in literature as “the glue” that holds everything together in schools. As McCluskey et al. (2008) articulated, RP was the glue that helped integrate programs such as peer mediation training, social skills courses, and cognitive reasoning programs. Participants in this study supported this notion by reporting that RP can be successful on its own but other programs may not be successful without RP, as it is the relationship piece that holds everything together. For example,

When you look at the change literature about a particular innovation or program, it cannot ever just stand-alone... and for restorative practices, it is the relationship piece... it's the glue that holds everything together in schools (Participant 12).

So, a school based on restorative practices offers quite a different culture of shared ownership, inclusive involvement, of valuing each member of the learning process and learning community, of being valued. You

know... like my point of view is valued and respected and attended to and contributive to making a difference (Participant 4).

Existing literature says that RP is particularly supportive for vulnerable populations, such as special needs students and students of color (Valdebenito et al., 2013). Literature highlights how these groups are disproportionately affected by punitive policies, particularly policies outlining punishment for subjectively judged offenses such as willful misconduct, which was reported by Friedman et al. (2014) as the most common reason given for most suspensions. Participants here reported that RP supports vulnerable populations and protects them from authorities with implicit biases that take advantage of policies that discriminate against such groups.

Teacher Student Relationships

Existing studies on attachment theory suggest that the more favorable the relationship with the teacher or primary caregiver, the healthier future relationships will be with others (Bowlby, 1969). Furthermore, literature on the significance of teacher-student relationships emphasize that this particular relationship is the most critical for students' overall academic success. As noted by Sabol and Pianta (2012), positive teacher-student relationships continue to impact student academic success from kindergarten to high school. Participants in this study reported that the teacher-student relationship is critical for successful educational outcomes and noted that it enhances voice and agency, ultimately empowering individuals and enhancing student engagement.

Agency and Classroom Climate

Literature points out that RP has the potential to change classroom climate and culture through agency, which McCluskey et al. (2008) noted as the capacity to make things better. Participants in this study said that after teachers experience the power of RP in a classroom and its difference on classroom climate, they would realize that the students are the ones making the difference, as they are ultimately the driving force of a healthy classroom climate. For example,

The successes are invisible. If you've got a teacher and a student who are in conflict with each other for example, and you need restorative practices to somehow resolve the conflict, it's not that you will see anything spectacular... the student goes on to continue to doing well in class, and the teacher goes on to teach well. It helps resolve the conflict that disrupts the class, but in many ways it's invisible... not particularly invisible, just difficult to measure other than anecdotally. Everything just seems better (Participant 5).

Teachers and the Power Dynamic

Literature points out that education is still quite heavily based on the notion that the teacher holds the expertise and knowledge and the flow of power is quite one-directional. Vaandering (2011) noted that for change to occur, power relationships underlying past ineffective practices must be challenged.

Participants in this study suggested that challenging the power dynamic in the classroom repositions the future of education. For example,

I think that the profession of being a teacher is actually challenged by hierarchical aspects of education. There's a question around knowledge. So I think restorative practice is a process for showing people how to maintain their own self-respect, while they're actually relinquishing a shifting to a different position as a teacher. So it also repositions education significantly and is potentially a story about how education is different and how knowledge is different or perceived differently, but... I think it's a step too far for most people doing this kind of work... for most people, it's about discipline rather than the relationship, but I think once you get past the notion of the authority of the teacher and knowledge, you actually are moving to a more democratic sort of interaction with students as the teacher... it's a way of potentially changing the future in education (Participant 5).

Retribution and Shame

Literature suggests that shame is something that results from harm and that the shame can end up in a cycle of repetitive harm between victims and offenders. Zehr (2002) noted that restorative justice theory posits that shame and humiliation should be removed and transformed. Studies further indicate that Restorative Practices remove shame and addresses the needs of both the victim and the offender, while encouraging the offender to take responsibility for

the wrongful action. Existing studies further indicate that shame and guilt must first be acknowledged through a restorative process, as noted by Harris et al. (2004) avoiding these two emotions can be detrimental to self and relationships. Participants in this study claimed that when shame and blame are alleviated in a school environment, people are more open to talk about feelings and learning and healing thus become more possible. For example,

When there is an environment that alleviates shame and blame and stigma and retribution and all of that... that's going to encourage people to speak out about the barriers to learning that they are encountering... whether it is about harassment or their own behavior (Participant 2).

Not a Panacea or Soft Option

Literature pointed to the notion that RP is not a panacea, nor is it intended to be (Winslade & Williams, 2012). Neustatter (2004) noted that the purpose of RP is to help students take responsibility for their actions and support them through resolving personal issues and conflict with others. Participants here also argued that RP is not a panacea and added that neither is it a soft option. Participants said that there are misconceptions around the notion that RP is too soft. Findings suggest that this is a false assumption, as one of the reasons is that students find it difficult to take responsibility for their actions and face the person they have wronged. Participants reported that the offender would rather be given the punishment in these circumstances.

Schools as Hierarchical Institutions

Literature suggests that retributive mindsets in hierarchical educational institutions are difficult to change. Vaandering (2011) reported that hierarchical institutions are typical of a dominating model and change in retributive and adversarial language is difficult. Literature further suggests that implementation of educational policies is largely dependent on federal and state agencies known as the “top” in hierarchical structures; “bottom” refers to districts, schools, and teachers in the educational setting (Marsh and Bowman, 1988, p. 3). Arguably, dependency solely on elite visions for improvement and adherence to decisions made by those in authority, has failed to reform schools and promote positive whole school change. Existing studies of top-down approaches to policy implementation emphasize that this approach is “power-coercive,” while bottom-up is more “collaborative” (p .4). Literature points out that both approaches have been historically “pitted” against each other (Scott, 2013, p. 3). Notably, the top-down strategies must include bottom-up participation in order to be successful. Participants in this study reported that the RP initiative is only successful in a collaborative environment with buy-in from all stakeholders, which is the only means to ensure successful and sustainable RP implementation. Furthermore, participants view RP as a collectivist perspective and reported that equity and fairness is only achieved by collectively including all stakeholders in decision-making processes. For example,

Let's go down the collective line and say; "How can we help to make things right?" It's the collective work that makes it work... blaming and shaming does not work... so I think the success of restorative practices depends on the larger conversations about the value of us collectively as a community, working together to make this a community that has a relational mindset, and a community with a relational interest... that we're not just here to gain knowledge and compete... that we're actually here to do life together (Participant 3).

Restorative practices are about building community and responding to harm collaboratively, in contrast to traditional hierarchical power structures in school organizations, largely influenced by external power structures (Participant 5).

I think one of the things that have been helpful in New Zealand is that the government has decided that this is what is going to happen (Participant 12).

Implementation

Literature was sparse on RP implementation. Existing studies however, highlighted that "readiness for change" (McCluskey et al., 2008) is significant for successful RP implementation, which includes "agency," or the "capacity to make things better" (p. 4). Participants here explained how schools went about

implementing restorative practices, including emphasizing implementation readiness and preparation. The most important aspect of implementation highlighted in the findings was that leadership buy-in is critical, with leadership effectiveness at the forefront. Without these two critical components, RP implementation will likely fail in schools. Another key factor for successful implementation was that schools have clear mission statements agreed upon by all stakeholders, as the key words of the mission statement become embedded in the RP language for the school, which ultimately incites a shift in school culture. Furthermore, participants reported that successful restorative practices implementation requires the collaborative effort of all stakeholders at any school site, including strong leadership, involvement of all school personnel, and community involvement. The participants emphasized that this approach will not be successful in top-down hierarchical power structures, because they do not embrace a collaborative approach to educational change. Furthermore, collaborative involvement of all stakeholders was stressed as key to achieving high levels of implementation of RP, which requires a lifetime commitment and takes up to ten years to achieve. For example,

And there are some indicators, depending on how they answer, whether a school is primed and ready for change, or it would be really risky and they need to be incredibly cautious, and they need to get some more things sorted... so that would be one of my prime themes is how ready is this school to take on a four or five year journey that needs to be managed

really carefully... so this would be one of the first things... and then secondly, what is the capacity for leadership to buy into this, because if leadership doesn't buy-in, you've got no hope (Participant 12).

The absolute first, second, third, fourth, and fifth important thing, is that the senior leadership has to talk the talk and walk the talk. Now, one of the substantive differences I think between our schools and American schools is that we have middle management. So there are people who were heads of faculty, such as deans, so that the difficult situations don't get outsourced up to the senior leadership team, they get sent to the middle layer in a school. So what makes it effective is a clear delineation between walls and responsibilities (Participant 12).

There's got to be a willingness to engage in long-term change... there's got to be sufficient leadership... there's got to be sufficient funding... there has to be people who understand the change management process and how complex it is (Participant 5).

So the conditions required would be valuing it, honoring it, prioritizing relationships, giving time and space to this process... these are the conditions that we are about in this community (Participant 3).

Existing studies highlight how RP implementation can improve school culture and climate and provide support for schools that are facing challenges that impede safety and peace (Pavelka, 2013). Literature further indicated that although there is always some resistance by staff members, overall school climate becomes calmer and students responded favorably to RP (Vaandering, 2011). Participants reported that RP improves and strengthens relationships, which improves school climate, ultimately shifting the culture of the school. Participants here further noted that resistance is inevitable, but students essentially respond favorably to the approach and appreciate being given an opportunity to be heard and make things right.

Lastly, studies pointed out that successful RP implementation depended on how deeply schools are engaged in the principles of RP and how tensions are managed between punitive policies and alternative practices for behavioral management (Vaandering, 2011). Participants reported that individualistic schools where punitive responses are dominant are a challenging endeavor for successful RP implementation. For example,

But to try and impose restorative practices on a school culture that is individualistic and competitive... it's a much bigger task. And for a lot of those schools, they don't think that's necessary, because it's about getting the results. And the results that they are getting are often at the expense of the humanity of the people in the school (Participant 12).

Learning Life Skills

Literature on RP in schools point out that this approach has the potential to teach students valuable life skills. As Thorsborne and Blood (2013) reported, it aims to improve the quality of relationships and pursues innovative learning and teaching in order to improve the relationships in the classroom and beyond.

Participants here reported that such lessons learned from RP processes can not only help students develop valuable life skills but can also help students become valuable citizens, as it not only teaches them how to have conversations with others in a restorative way, but it also helps them learn how to handle inevitable conflict. For example,

Again I think it's a more productive learning... there's more opportunities for learning for students... So some of the aspects of learning is obviously related to educational, but it is also about learning life skills and... I think that that is going to help students become better citizens through having been dealt with in a sort of more restorative way, because of the learning that takes place... (Participant 3).

Evidence on RP in current literature further points to the fact that schools need to develop an ethos that reduces conflict in the first place. Findings suggest that a restorative ethos can not only prevent conflict from happening in the first place, but can also empower youth and to become more proactive about their environment and school community.

Purpose and Significance of the Restorative Practices Process

Literature pointed out that the primary purpose of restorative practices in schools needs to be understood. Neustatter (2004) reported that restorative practices addresses behavior that causes harm in a manner that leads to healing, which is the primary purpose of restorative practices in schools. Literature further highlights that the purpose of RP is to educate people, rather than solely on behavior management. Participants further reported that the value of RP is in the learning, not solely the outcome. For example,

The value of it is the process. It's not just about the so-called outcome... it's not just that we "live happily ever after"... that we "kissed and made up." The value is in the process to get to that place, and what we've all learned, and how we've understood each other at a human level. That is sometimes not seen as valued or seen as being part of what we get from this. That may not even been seen at all (it's hard to evidence in ways that satisfy those needing numbers or "empirical research")... So the question is "how do we raise the status" of all that interpersonal stuff, so that it becomes equally or more valued and recognized (Participant 11).

Qualitative Case Study Research

Qualitative case study research can help discover the complexities and nuances of the learning nature of RP (Mullet, 2014) and is necessary for investigating the approach, because it provides rich insight from stakeholders with experience of RP, which will help narrow the gap on understandings of the

transformative nature. Participants in this study reported that the RP approach strengthens relationships, teacher-student relationships, positively impacts classroom climate and culture and school climate and culture, and may potentially transform society.

Implications for a Better Society

Existing literature on the impact of RP on school climate and culture was well documented. Mullet (2014) argued that caring school climates are transformative because they help people feel better, and when people feel better, they do better. The participants reported that RP has the potential to transform school climate and culture, but also noted that RP has the potential to transform societies and may potentially promote world peace. For example,

It's not about blame and shame but it's about healing and community and connection, so it creates a better society (Participant 1).

Implications for school culture and learning can transcend beyond the school site (Participant 5).

This approach could help bring about world peace (Participant 12).

Summary of Findings

What emerged was that RP appeared to make a significant difference for youth and had the potential to strengthen and improve relationships, teacher-

student relationships, classroom climate and culture and school climate and culture. Furthermore the participants held visions of how RP could lead to improved societies and potential world peace. However they also stressed how implementation of RP requires a high level of commitment from all staff and a significant amount of preparation before implementation is possible.

Furthermore, it is evident from these participants that RP is making significant differences for schools in New Zealand. Leadership buy-in and effective leadership were noted as most significant for successful RP implementation.

Furthermore, implementing RP was noted as a whole-school initiative that required buy-in, participation and training of all school personnel. Students were also urged to participate in trainings, although student participation was voluntary and did not impact successful implementation. Furthermore, it appeared that initial teacher resistance could be high, largely from pervasive punitive discourses and fear of relinquishing power in the classroom. The recommendation by one participant was that resistant teachers should be given at least three to four years before they should be required to participate. One suggestion was that RP should be embedded into performance evaluations.

Although the power dynamic in the classroom was noted as being one of the reasons why teachers resist, a much larger problem was that they are inundated with too many duties handed to them by school leaders. Lastly, participants emphasized that the reason they are having great success with this approach is that they have received government buy-in. By contrast, participants reported

that political leadership buy-in might be challenging in other countries, especially in American schools, since the punitive mindset is so deeply embedded. Furthermore, New Zealand and America appear to have opposing political views on punitive discipline, which may explain why New Zealand has had such enormous success with this approach. Furthermore, findings indicate that top-down authoritative structures will not be successful with this approach. Therefore, since American educational institutions largely depend on top-down hierarchical structures, the potential for this approach to spread as quickly as it has in New Zealand is unlikely. This study also highlighted that New Zealand is largely a constructivist country, whereas America is more individualistic. This study showed that when educational institutions acknowledged that the punitive approach ineffective for cultivating caring and safe school cultures, this was the first step for hopeful transformation. Lastly, results showed that the RP approach fostered social transformation and that schools could be the hopeful light that societies have been searching for. Participants from this study noted that school might be a platform for social transformation, as this is where youth spend a majority of their time. Transformation, therefore, appears to be possible with this approach.

Recommendations for Educational Leaders

Based on the results of this study, I recommend that educational leaders gain awareness of alternative disciplinary practices that are addressing the

growing problem with suspensions and expulsions and positioning our youth on the pipeline-to-prison. There is a call for effective leadership in schools who can foster the conditions necessary for systemic change in schools and to help others find collective meaning and commitment to new approaches that lead to change such as the significance of improving relationships and lifelong learning. It appears that high levels of implementation take approximately ten years for large schools and three to four years for smaller schools. I would caution leaders that patience is called for and that time makes a difference in terms of success. If implemented correctly, however, data on schools on suspensions, expulsions, detentions and office referrals should reveal significant decreases. Data from the schools where RP has been implemented would also prove its effectiveness.

Educational leaders could also attend RP conferences to gain more knowledge on the approach and if they are interested in implementation. Educational leaders may also benefit by looking at other educational institutional models in their state that have been successful with funding and implementation. For principals who are interested in implementation, one recommendation is that they fully understand that it is a lifetime commitment. Additionally, principals need to understand that this process is a high support and high accountability approach that requires effective leadership to carry the process out to its full potential. Lastly, principals must understand the reasons why they will face resistance and that patience with this approach is necessary in order to reach its highest potential.

Next Steps for Educational Reform

The results of this study can inform legislation and state and local accrediting agencies about an innovative approach that is making significant differences for youth around the world in K-12 settings. Furthermore, the RP approach for schools can guide educational reform movements that seek alternative responses that help decrease suspensions and expulsions and narrow the school to prison pipeline gap. The role that I will play as an educational leader to support the movement of RP in K-12 schools, is that I will participate in ongoing education by attending RP conferences, RP trainings, and will attaining an RP certificate from Simon Fraser University in Canada, where I have been currently accepted in a one year on-line program. I also plan on returning to New Zealand to be trained by one of the pioneers of restorative practices in schools worldwide, who have been working as a consultant with schools in the region of Auckland, New Zealand for over twenty-five years. Furthermore, I plan on continuing my research in the field of RP and will write journal articles and books in the future on this topic. Lastly, the knowledge I have gained from experts in the field and my personal studies will be utilized to help my own community with the implementation of RP in schools. This project is only the beginning.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research project included recordings of experienced RP practitioners in the field of restorative practices in the region of Auckland, New Zealand. Further research would need to extend to other regions of New Zealand and well and other regions of the world in the educational context. More quantitative studies are needed for demonstrating the impact of restorative practices for schools. Also, studies that involve baseline measures and comparative groups can measure the effects of RP in schools. Furthermore, more qualitative studies that include teachers' perspectives, students' perspectives, and parents' perspectives would help develop greater understanding of how people who have experienced this approach feel about it. Additionally, more research needs to be done on implementation readiness, as studies on this topic are limited and this appears to be a significant indicator for success. Furthermore, it may be beneficial to conduct research longitudinally as this approach would measure ongoing success with the RP approach that goes beyond the school site. Moreover, the results from the longitudinal studies can help decision makers plan for the future and make modifications that are necessary for ongoing success.

Another recommendation would be for each K-12 school implementing RP to conduct their own research continually to gauge progress of RP and implementation issues, which can inform policy and practice and support understandings of barriers that may get in the way of its progress. Lastly, more meta-analysis research is needed aimed at assessing effectiveness of RP

implementation in K-12 settings. Furthermore, the data that comes from this type of research can be used to inform policy and practice and can be used by authorities for planning and decision-making. Another research strategy that has not been previously explored is the impact RP has on expulsion rates. A controlled study comparing the RP approach with a different approach with similar outcome expectations may also be warranted. Similar studies focusing on school exclusion and the school-to-prison pipeline may also prove to be beneficial, as this phenomena is currently only an assumption in research based on the data highlighting a large percentage of students of color being expelled or dropping out of school and the percentage of colored individuals incarcerated or imprisoned.

Limitations of Study

The information collected in this study regarding participants' experiences with the RP approach by twelve experts in the field regarding an innovative alternative non-punitive approach to discipline in schools, provides valuable insight of the purpose, significance and implementation of this approach in schools. However, we need to be cautioned by limitations that may lead to inaccuracy of assumptions about this approach. The study's exploration of restorative practices was limited to the region of Auckland, New Zealand. It could be possible that other regions in the world have different views about the approach for schools.

Furthermore, there were only twelve participants from various professional settings and not solely in the K-12 school setting. There were four school counselors and two school deans in this study that worked in secondary school settings only. Other studies may benefit from exploring RP as it pertains to various K-12 settings, rather than only from the lens of secondary schools. Research has shown that the earlier the RP principles are taught to youth, the better their educational experience and life will be. Therefore, studies that focus on outcomes with this approach in elementary school setting would also prove to be beneficial for understanding the usefulness and success with RP. Furthermore, school deans and counselors have different roles and responsibilities in the school, which may also mean that they also have very different experiences with the approach. Additionally, since the participants were from different professional settings, they may have different views that may not be consistent with each other.

Another limitation may be that the success of this approach in New Zealand may be attributable to the national culture and not solely the RP process. The RP approach therefore, may not prove to be as successful in other regions of the world. In the same vein, since this is the first qualitative study on restorative practices in New Zealand conducted by an American researcher, the implications discussed in this study does not guarantee similar outcomes with the RP process in other regions of the world.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine an innovative alternative disciplinary approach for K-12 schools called restorative practices. The problem identified in this study was that zero-tolerance policies have fostered a global crisis and have resulted in an enormous number of students suspended or expelled from school. The implications of this educational deprivation of youth is fostering unsafe classroom and school climates, and ultimately fostering unsafe societies. Furthermore, there is a national concern that harsh punitive practices are contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline. The purpose of this study was to explore restorative practices from the lens of experts in the field in New Zealand, to gain a better understanding of its purpose and significance for schools. The results of this study shows that restorative practices are a hopeful solution to fostering healthier school classrooms and school environments. Furthermore, the approach appears to have significant potential to strengthen and heal relationships and provide youth with interpersonal skills and conflict management skills that will benefit their lives in significant ways. RP also appears to be a useful approach in significantly shifting school cultures, which may then impact societies and potentially promote world peace.

APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Academic Affairs
Office of Academic Research • Institutional Review Board

August 30, 2016

Ms. Dorry Lillard and Prof. John Winslade
Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and Counseling
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

**CSUSB
INSTITUTIONAL
REVIEW BOARD**
Expedited Review
IRB# 16001
Status
APPROVED

Dear Ms. Lillard and Prof. Winslade:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Understanding the Purpose of Restorative Justice Practices in New Zealand Schools" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The attached informed consent document has been stamped and signed by the IRB chairperson. All subsequent copies used must be this officially approved version. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended. **Your application is approved for one year from August 30, 2016 through August 29, 2017. One month prior to the approval end date you need to file for a renewal if you have not completed your research. See additional requirements (Items 1 – 4) of your approval below.**

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following 4 requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years. Please notify the IRB Research Compliance Officer for any of the following:

- 1) **Submit a protocol change form if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your research protocol for review and approval of the IRB before implemented in your research,**
- 2) **If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research,**
- 3) **To apply for renewal and continuing review of your protocol one month prior to the protocols end date,**
- 4) **When your project has ended by emailing the IRB Research Compliance Officer.**

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Judy Sylva

Judy Sylva, Ph.D., Chair
Institutional Review Board

JS/MG

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APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM



College of Education
Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation and Counseling

Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Dorry Lillard, a doctoral student, and supervised by Dr. John Winslade, a professor from the counseling and guidance program at California State University San Bernardino. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of three components of restorative justice; undercover anti-bullying teams, circles, and conferencing, and collect data that will support the goal of gaining an international perspective on the process of restorative justice in New Zealand schools.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are currently undergoing a restorative justice process. There is no cost to you. This study consists of observations only of your participation in one of the restorative justice processes mentioned above. I will be observing you from a distance and taking notes of what you are saying during the restorative process. Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form, once all of your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. No additional time will be required, other than the time you are required by your school for the restorative conversation or process.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. Identities will be kept confidential by safeguarding all information collected in a locked safe that only Dorry Lillard will have access to. Information collected during the study, will be kept no longer than 30 days after the cessation of the study. Data collected, such as the notes taken of the observations, will then be destroyed.

California State University, San Bernardino
Institutional Review Board Committee
APPROVED 08/30/16 VOID AFTER 08/29/17
IRB# 160201 CHAIR Judy Sylvia

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It is not anticipated that there will be any major risks to you from participating. The benefits will lie in the encouragement that this study offers to others who might be interested in utilizing restorative justice processes for addressing issues that arise in school.

Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at +1 760-285-4031, or send an email to dorrylillard@yahoo.com. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr John Winslade, at +1 909 537 7312 or jwinslad@csusb.edu

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you received a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims.

Participant Signature

Date

Parent Signature

Date

California State University, San Bernardino
Institutional Review Board Committee
APPROVED 08/20/16 VOID AFTER 08/29/17
IRB# 16001 CHAIR Judy Sylvester

APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT FORM



College of Education
Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation and Counseling

Informed Consent Form to Participate in Study

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Dorry Lillard, a doctoral student, and supervised by Dr. John Winslade, a professor from the counseling and guidance program at California State University San Bernardino. I hope to learn about why restorative justice practices are important and inquire about the implementation issues schools encounter from your professional perspective. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have extensive knowledge and experience with restorative justice practices.

You were also selected based on your pre-existing knowledge of restorative justice practices and the utilization and/or research of restorative justice practices, with Undercover Anti-Bullying Teams, Circles, and/or Conferencing in schools. The cost to you is approximately one half hour of your time. A potential benefit would be an opportunity for you to reflect further about your experiences and knowledge about restorative justice practices and the usefulness of this approach. Participation in the study may prove to be an educational experience for you, while also contributing to a deeper understanding of the nature of restorative justice practices.

If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed in person by Dorry Lillard, a doctoral student from California State University San Bernardino. You will be asked questions regarding your experiences with restorative justice practices. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes to no more than one hour to complete. The interview will be voice recorded in order to transcribe the content for data analysis and dissemination.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. Identities will be kept confidential by

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California State University, San Bernardino

Institutional Review Board Committee

APPROVED 08/30/16 VOID AFTER 08/29/17
IRB# 16001 CHAIR Judy Sylva

safeguarding all information collected in a locked safe that only Dorry Lillard will have access to. Voice recordings and information collected during the study, will be kept no longer than 30 days after the cessation of the study. Data collected, including voice recordings and notes taken from the interview, will then be destroyed.

It is not anticipated that there will be any major risks to you from participating, but doing so will cost about half an hour of your time and some thought about your answers. The benefits will lie in the encouragement that this study offers to others who might be interested in implementing restorative justice practices.

Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at +1 760-285-4031, or send an email to dorrylillard@yahoo.com. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr John Winslade, at +1 909 537 7312 or jwinslad@csusb.edu

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims.

Signed _____

Date _____

I also understand that the interview will be audio-recorded and I give consent for my interview to be recorded.

California State University, San Bernardino
Institutional Review Board Committee
APPROVED 3/30/16 VOID AFTER 3/29/17
IRB# 16001 CHAIR Judy Sylvano

Signed _____

California State University, San Bernardino
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